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ALLIGATOR PEAR

The poolside Alligator Pear restaurant serves healthy and tasty meals, fresh fruits, juices and international favourites in a casual tropical setting.

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Anti:dote offers a progressive selection of concoctions that combines the craftsmanship of traditional bartending and the artistry of experimental mixology techniques.

ASIAN MARKET CAFÉ

Asian Market Café offers a glorious buffet spread showcasing the breadth of Halal-certified cuisine. This sumptuous buffet reflects diverse flavours and cultures.

CAFÉ SWISS

Try the tempting selection of appetisers, salads and soups from the sumptuous buffet lunch or dinner that offers a variety of European fare at Café Swiss.

CITY SPACE

Rated as one of the 50 Best Bars in the World, City Space is a haven of sophistication, known for its innovative cocktails and service.

EQUINOX RESTAURANT

Renowned for its culinary experience and awe-inspiring views, Equinox offers Modern European cuisine that pays homage to traditional values.

INTROBAR

Introbar offers an impressive array of martinis, cocktails, wines and international spirits. Or recharge with an aromatic cup of coffee, tea or a sundowner special.

KOPI TIAM

Explore the multi-cultural flavours of Singapore at Kopi Tiam, with signature dishes such as Fried Carrot Cake and Rojak, or Fish Head Curry and Laksa.

MIKUNI

Diners enjoy Mikuni's modern approach to traditional Japanese dishes. Highlighted by a robatayaki counter; sushi, sashimi and teppanyaki stations; and a vibrant Sake Bar.

NEW ASIA

Perched 71 floors above the city, the world gravitates at New Asia. Revellers dance the night away with and sexy pulsating tunes against the panorama of Singapore.

PREGO

One of Singapore's favourite Italian restaurants unveils a new look and enhanced dining concept to offer an authentic Italian family style dining experience.

SZECHUAN COURT

Szechuan Court unveils a lavish dining concept that captivates both the eye and palate. The menu features Chinese delights, combining Szechuan and Cantonese cuisines.

pullman
HOTELS AND RESORTS

OUR WORLD IS YOUR PLAYGROUND

Exciting times at the upscale, contemporary Pullman hotel brand.

Since its launch in 2007, Pullman has not stopped turning heads, developing hotels in some of the world's hottest destinations, and recently passing its 100th opening, this one in New Delhi, India. Currently with 56 hotels in the pipeline worldwide Pullman is unmistakably a brand that's "on the go".

Cosmopolitan, modern, and a touch edgy, the vibrant Pullman brand appeals to a new generation of "work hard, play hard" professional travellers for whom the Pullman world is their playground. These modern, hyper-connected global nomads choose Pullman for its smart, sophisticated, functional design, its best-in-class business and fitness facilities and its high-speed connectivity which is available throughout the hotel.

Enticing cuisine is another plus. Pullman's "Open Kitchen" concept allows guests to discover the talents and savoir-faire of Pullman chefs whilst "Vinoteca by Pullman" provides guests with a superlative wine selection.

Whether you are looking for urban chic or resort hideaway, Pullman has them both covered. In Southeast Asia the brand is really making its mark with a succession of glamourous openings including The Park Lane Hong Kong, a Pullman Hotel and Pullman Nanjing Lukou Airport.

In April 2016, Pullman Phuket Panwa Beach Resort will open on gorgeous Cape Panwa on the coast of Phuket in southern Thailand. This stylishly upscale 221 room resort, including 29 villas, will feature breathtaking views of the Andaman Sea and a pristine 350-metre-long beach frontage. As well as having easy access to island cruises and world class golf courses, the resort is just a three-minute drive from the popular Panwa View Point and 20 minutes from historical Phuket Town.

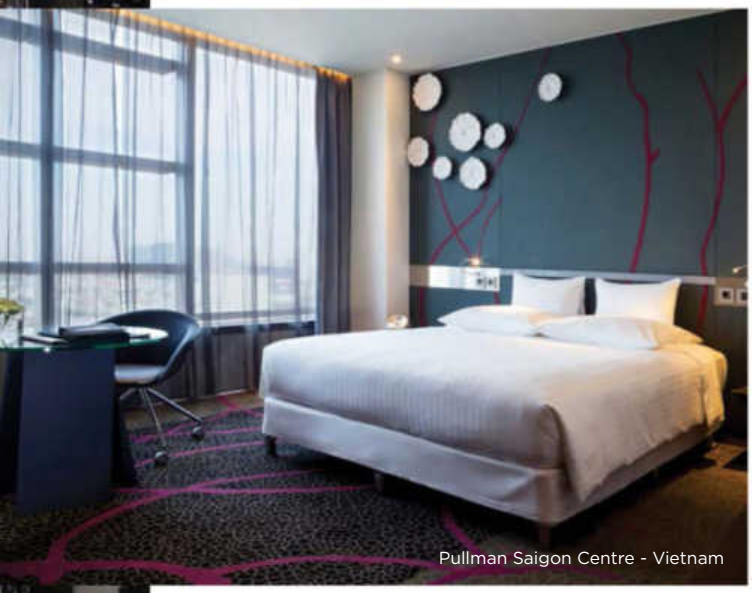
Pullman Bangkok Grande Sukhumvit - Thailand

Pullman Khao Lak Katiliya Resort and Villas - Thailand

The launch follows the successful unveiling in August 2015 of cosmopolitan trendsetter Pullman Bangkok Grande Sukhumvit, which is situated in the very heart of the Thai capital. The building's striking sail-shaped design punctuates the skyline, while the city's vibrant core is just outside the front doorstep.

Equally well suited for high-end business or leisure travellers, Pullman Bangkok Grande Sukhumvit offers everything today's globetrotter is looking for: hyper-connectivity, outstanding facilities, and chic, stylish interiors, which can be found in each of the hotel's 325 guest rooms.

Last year, the brand also opened the spectacular Pullman Khao Lak Katiliya Resort & Villas, a hidden paradise set amidst untouched rainforest fringed by a 13-kilometre pristine beach. The resort features 320 rooms and villas with a contemporary design and Thai influences. This tranquil and hidden escape allows guests to "check in and chill out," with world-class international diving and snorkelling locations nearby, along with verdant golf courses and exceptionally beautiful islands and exquisite national parks.



Pullman Saigon Centre - Vietnam

In 2015, Pullman redefined upscale hospitality in Ho Chi Minh City with the introduction of the brand's flagship Southeast Asia hotel: Pullman Saigon Centre. Sophisticated, high-tech design is found throughout the property, with 323 guest rooms enjoying floor-to-ceiling windows with spectacular views of the city's skyline. The newly built hotel property is located in lively District 1 near the bustling Ben Thanh market, Saigon's most famous local market.

On the horizon are dynamic new projects in Luang Prabang, Laos (2016) and the Maldives (2018), exciting locales that will surely be on the radar of front-line travellers in coming years.

By 2020, Pullman expects to offer in its portfolio more than 60,000 rooms in 200 hotels worldwide.

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On the Cover
At The Old Clare hotel in Sydney, part of this year's It List, page 53. Photographed by John Laurie.

features

78 **100 Places to Go in Asia** We mark our milestone 100th issue with a grand tour of inspiring islands, hotels and 'hoods, restaurants, rail trips and adventures. Perusing this compendium, you'll see why we found that the hardest part about picking 100 awesome places in Asia isn't in compiling the list, but in culling it.

94 **Raising The House** An opulent old manor in the middle of new Bangkok is reawakening the Gilded Age. The House on Sathorn sashays back into the spotlight as the city's most coveted address for dining, drinking and generally being fabulous—just the way its founder would have wanted. *By Jeninne Lee-St. John. Photographed by Ausadavut Sarum*

102 **Off the Map** In the northern reaches of Yunnan, a Tibetan-influenced land with any number of names demands you slow down and enjoy the moment, even if you cannot fathom exactly where you are. *Story and photographs by Christopher Kucway*

112 **Star Power** Ensconced aboard a luxury train in Kyushu, *Duncan Forgan* discovers the forces of nature—and modern engineering—that make the volcanic, charismatic Japanese island shine so bright. *Photographed by Aaron Joel Santos*

FROM LEFT: AARON JOEL SANTOS; CHRISTOPHER KUCWAY; COURTESY OF BURMA BOATING; AUSADAVUT SARUM

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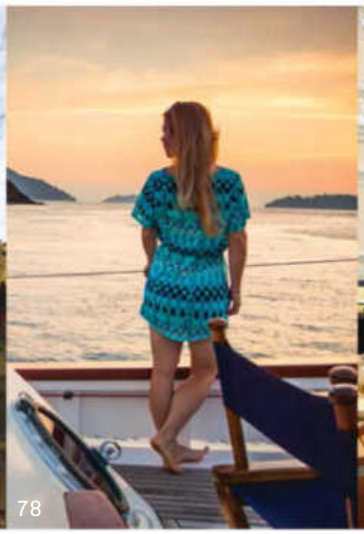
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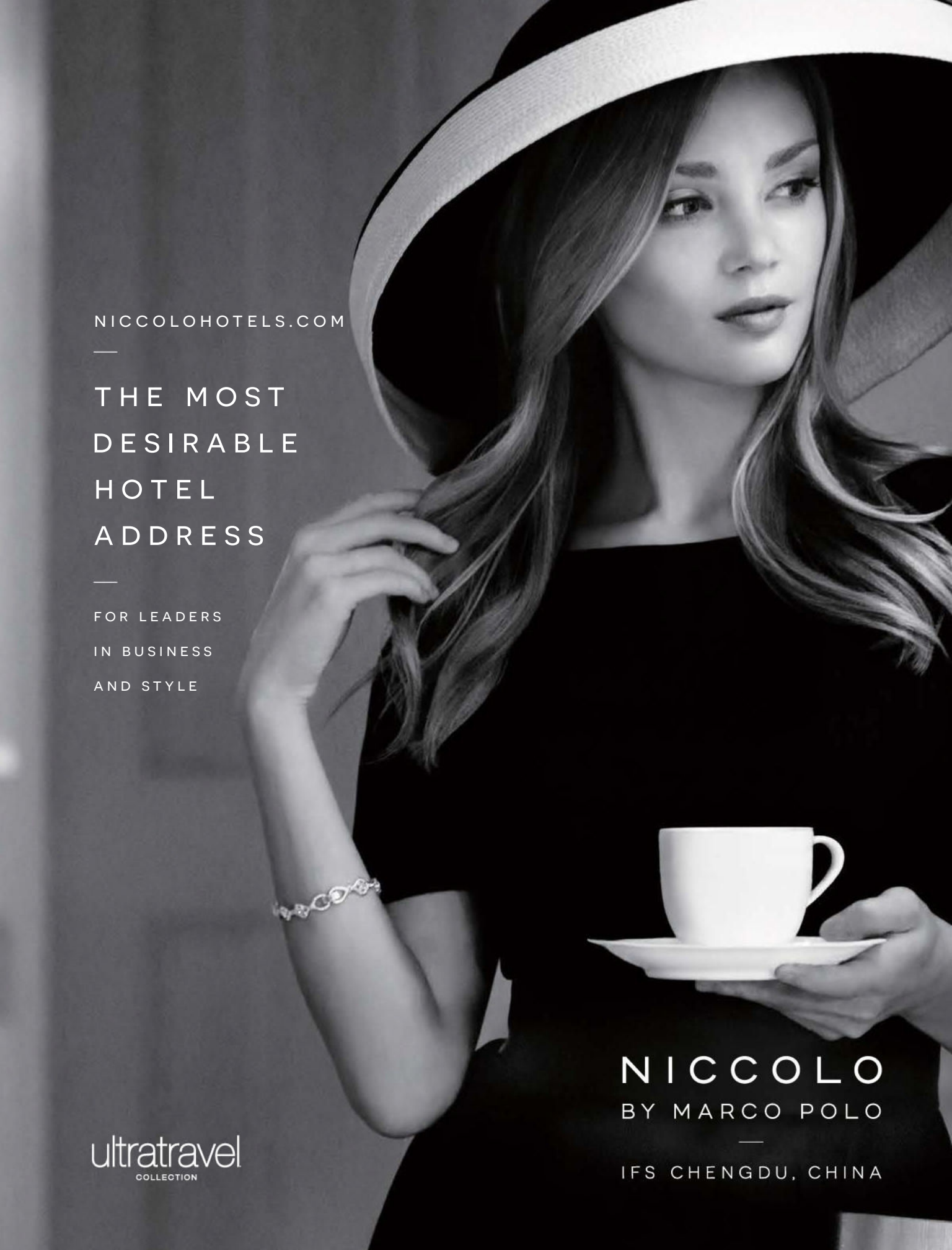
FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF DREAM PHUKET HOTEL & SPA; JOHN LAURIE; CELINE CLANET; COURTESY OF FAIRMONT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LOOKOUT

Hong Kong's striking stairs; Korean tacos in Singapore; Malaysia's trendiest designers; the latest travel deals and much more.
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THIS MONTH ON TRAVELANDLEISUREASIA.COM

RETURN TO NEPAL
A poignant photo series, taken before the country's devastating earthquake, captures the natural beauty of the Himalayas.

PALAWAN'S UNSPOILED SECRET
With pristine beaches, a rich local culture and almost no tourists in sight, San Vicente is a dream of a retreat.

3 ECO-RESORTS IN SRI LANKA
Stylish, environmentally sensible boutiques are cropping up all over the Pearl of the Indian Ocean.

FROM LEFT: ALEX TREADWAY; RICHARD MARKS; COURTESY OF TRI

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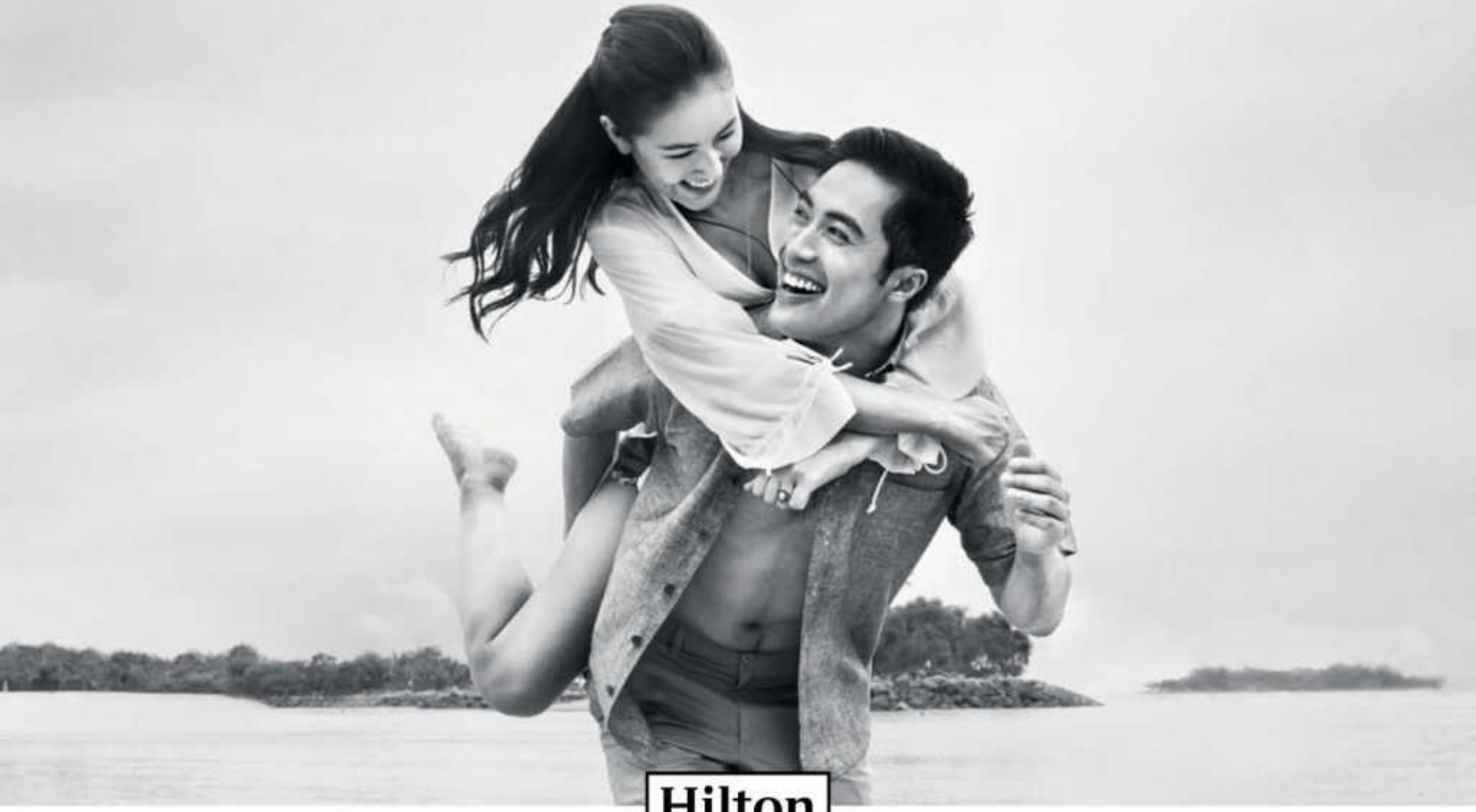

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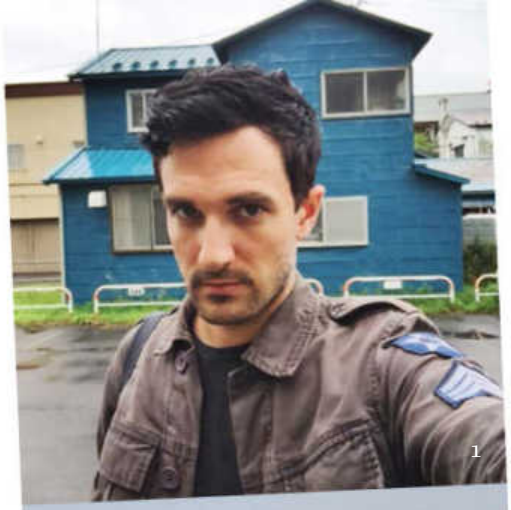

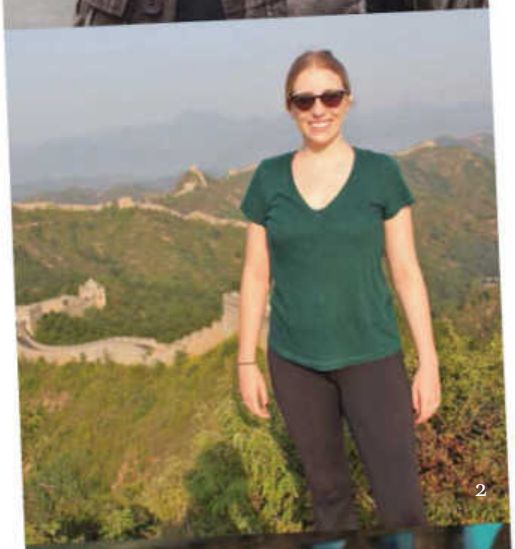

1

Aaron Joel Santos

PHOTOGRAPHER

Star Power

page 112

—

"The *Seven Stars* was easily one of the best trains I've ever been on. But I was taken with the countryside as well. It was a bit trance-like, watching the mountains and small villages pass by the windows of the train. Working in Japan can be a bit intimidating at first. There's a language barrier. I think I come across as this strange, gangly, awkward Westerner wielding a camera and trying to communicate in some esoteric language of grins and hand gestures and nods and whatever else. When things fall into place, however, it's a favorite place to take pictures." *Instagram: @aaronjoelsantos*

2

Ashley Niedringhaus

WRITER

Sand Castles

page 37

—

"A few months ago I had lunch at this brilliant beach restaurant on Koh Khai Nui off Phuket's west coast. It's a pinhead-sized island, and the restaurant occupied most of its land mass, but the beer was cold and the fish fresh. Those are the Phuket moments that keep me coming back. With the sense of seclusion on Phuket feeling long gone, I like to get out on the water and away from the crowds. Maybe it's even time for them to get innovative with underwater resorts. Outside of my Asian backyard, my bucket list of dream islands includes Bora Bora and the Seychelles." *Instagram: @sometimeswojno*

3

Juliana Loh

WRITER

Cool Quarter

page 42

—

"Macau's design scene is organic and growing slowly. It's slim pickings, but there are stores like Prism Creative Macau, which represents only local creatives, Macau Design Centre and En Masse. In recent months, lots of stores have sprung up in the old quarter by St. Paul's with oddly curated items that neither pledge identity nor provenance. You still can find vintage stationary shops. And ad hoc flea markets sell World War I-dated postcards handwritten in Portuguese, French and English for just MOP10, records from the 1940s, and firecracker labels, which I collect." *Instagram: @chickenscrawlings*

4

Duncan Forgan

WRITER

Star Power

page 112

—

"For me, what stands out most about Japan is the aspiration to perfection and convenience in even the most throwaway food and beverage items. Even in the middle of nowhere in a no-horse village, there still will be a choice of two fully stocked vending machines, convenience stores with the freshest buns you will ever taste and lovingly prepared fast food. It's slightly obsessive but also admirable. Japan's never short on things a *gaijin* might class as eccentric. The *Seven Stars* groupies struck me as slightly outré. It is a lovely train—but it is still a train." *Instagram: @dunc1978*

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF AARON JOEL SANTOS; COURTESY OF ASHLEY NIEDRINGHAUS; COURTESY OF JULIANA LOH; COURTESY OF DUNCAN FORGAN

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COULD YOU COME UP WITH 100 PLACES YOU'D LOVE TO VISIT IN ASIA?

Since this marks the 100th issue of *Travel+Leisure* Southeast Asia, that's one of the tasks we set out for ourselves this month (see the results on page 78), and, to be honest, I think we left out about 400 that could have made the final cut. Turns out that it's easy to come up with 100 worthy trips, meals, sights and settings in this region brimming with cultural, culinary and scenic diversity. Whether it's sipping a sundowner on Phu Quoc in Vietnam, city-hopping for haute Chinese meals, or following Sri Lanka's tea trail, excellent food and drink options abound. Then there are the reinvented ways of visiting popular spots. How about a luxury cruise on the Mekong? Staying in style on West Lake in Hangzhou or hot-air ballooning in Laos? Asia offers endless opportunities for all types of travelers.

March also brings our annual It List (page 53), the new hotels and resorts you're going to want to make your homes away from home. This year you'll find wonderful new addresses everywhere from Siem Reap to Singapore, Chengdu to Ubud among other locales. Farther-flung destinations such as Istanbul, Barcelona, Marrakesh and Kenya boast great new properties as well, so this is definitely some required reading to help you plan your next break. Wherever that is, let us know of your latest finds; we know the wish list only gets longer.

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From My Travels

On average, I'm asked where my favorite place in Asia is about once a day. My answer, no matter how brief I try to make it, always goes on endlessly. While I love the urban overload of Tokyo, Hong Kong and Singapore, I also yearn to chill out in Ubud, while away an afternoon in a Phuket spa and eat until I no longer can in Taipei. But if forced to pick one locale to which I definitely have to return, it would be Bhutan. It's made it into this issue, and it's always in the back of my mind. Anyone who has been there will understand, and anyone who has yet to visit should plan a trip now.

FROM LEFT: THANAKORN CHOMNAWANG; CHRISTOPHER KUCWAY

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On our watch

*Few hotels celebrate a 140th birthday, but that's exactly what the **Mandarin Oriental Bangkok** is doing this year. First opened in 1876, the hotel has hosted everyone from Joseph Conrad to Lauren Bacall. Here are some lesser-known facts:*

Bt100
Price of a room in 1947 when the hotel's longest-serving employee, 95-year-old Ankana Kalantananda, started work there

2
Number of floors the hotel had at its 1876 opening, the first building in Thailand aside from royal palaces with two levels

Bt20
Cost of a dinner at the Oriental in 1947

US$250
Amount six investors each contributed to purchase and restore the property in 1947

3:1
Hotel staff to guest ratio, one of the highest in the world

#TLASIA

THIS MARCH, READERS OFFER THEIR MOST ALLURING RESORT PHOTOS

A treetop view from Hanging Gardens of Bali, in Ubud. By @tripsofourlife

Swimming in Kuala Lumpur, backed by the skyline. By @petedemarco

Davao in the Philippines. By @kilometerzeroph

Lazy afternoons at Inle Princess resort in Burma. By @monoubani

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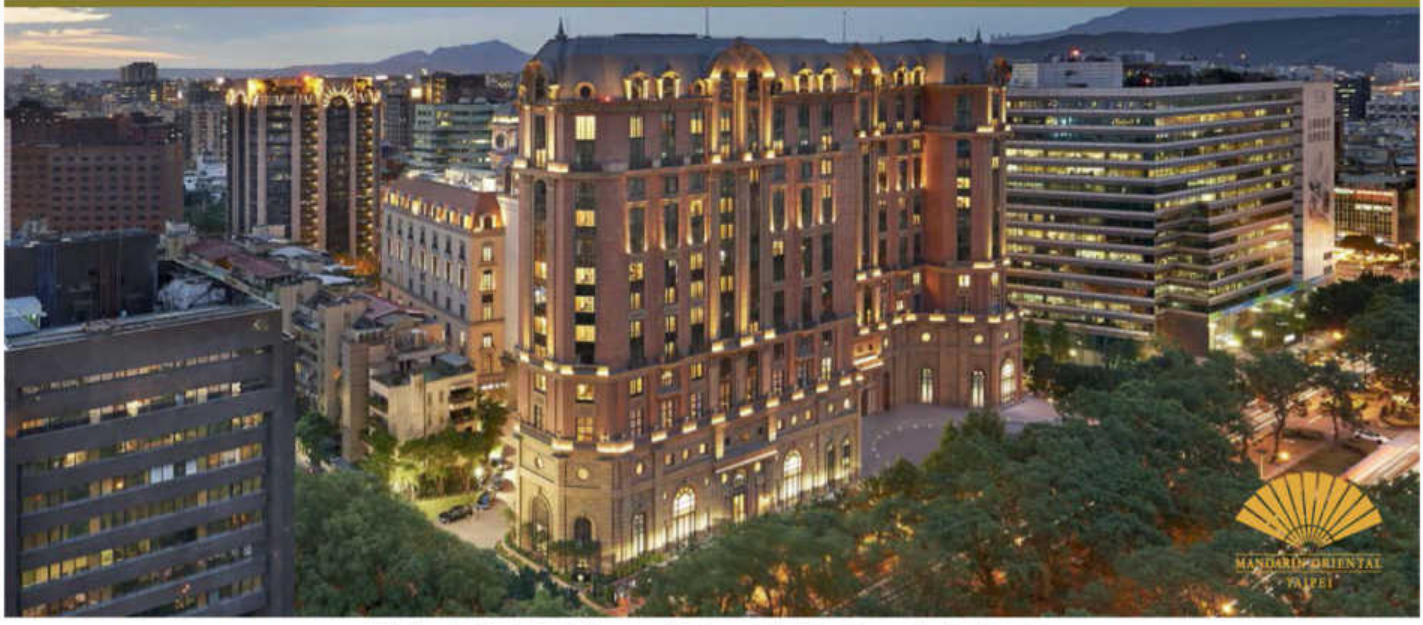

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Playing It Cool

Sydney's inner-city neighborhood of Chippendale gets a long-awaited upgrade. BY EMMA SLOLEY
PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOHN LAURIE

To most Sydneysiders, the former workingclass enclave of Chippendale was a nondescript area easily overlooked in favor of the posh, beachy eastern suburbs. But just as its neighbors—Surry Hills, >>

The rooftop pool at The Old Clare Hotel, a new arrival in Chippendale.

FROM FAR LEFT: Long communal tables at Automata, in The Old Clare; portraits at the cutting-edge White Rabbit Collection; a public plaza in the Central Park complex.

Redfern and Darlinghurst—have been transformed by gentrification, so too has a creative scene come to Chippendale's once rough-and-tumble streets.

At the vanguard of the revival is **The Old Clare Hotel** *(theoldclarehotel.com.au; doubles from A$279)*, which occupies a 1915 brewery and a 1930s pub. The owners have taken great care to honor the buildings' impressive bones while incorporating contemporary global influences: Midcentury Danish furniture, light fixtures from a Lebanese design studio, organic toiletries from New Zealand brand Triumph & Disaster, a sexy rooftop pool and tongue-in-cheek Aussie touches including black tote bags in the closets printed with phrases like RANDOM CRAP.

The heart of the hotel is its restored Art Deco pub, a cozy room with original tiled walls, a curved bar, frosted saloon doors and dog-eared band posters from the likes of the White Stripes and Tori Amos. (There's no longer live music at the bar, but the stereo plays homegrown acts.) The design quirks, such as a rotary phone that plays recordings of poetry when the receiver is lifted, haven't alienated the "Chippo" residents. On a late weekday afternoon, two burly construction workers in bright reflective vests were at the bar having an after-work schooner of beer.

The Old Clare is also home to one of the city's boldest and most talked-about new restaurants, **Automata** *(automata.com.au; tasting menus from A$88)*, whose dining room has long tables and antique machinery collected from scrapyards. Chef Clayton Wells's menu includes what many are calling "Sydney's least Instagrammable dish": a sublime and amorphous black mass of steamed hapuku over roe emulsion draped with wilted nori.

A few blocks away is the much-awarded **Ester** *(ester-restaurant.com.au; mains A$18–$89)*, a Chippendale pioneer that serves wood-fired comfort food in a stylishly austere space. Try dishes like bone marrow with sambal or a "sanga" (Aussie for sandwich) made with blood sausage. Nearby at **LP's Quality Meats** *(lpsqualitymeats.com; mains A$14–$44)*, the cavernous dining room has moody lighting and terrazzo floors. Sample chef Luke Powell's grilled octopus with chorizo, or the lamb belly stuffed with *merguez*—straight from the Southern Pride Smoker he had shipped all the way from Tennessee.

The tattooed brigades congregate at **Sterling Apothecary** *(sterlingapothecary.com)*, a barbershop offering old-fashioned straight-razor shaves (there's also a beauty salon in the back). It will soon sell its own products, including an aftershave tonic blended with bay rum, cloves and vanilla.

The art crowd has been flocking to the neighborhood, too. At **White Rabbit** gallery *(whiterabbitcollection.org)*, owner Judith Neilson shows contemporary Chinese art by leading figures like Ai Weiwei. The **Ambush** art gallery *(ambushgallery.com)*, in the gleaming Central Park building, highlights work from local and international talent. And cementing the neighborhood's cultural reputation is Frank Gehry's first Australian creation, the paper-bag-esque Dr. Chau Chak Wing Building at the University of Technology Sydney, which opened last year. Visitors can check out the sculptural stainless-steel staircase in the lobby and the Level 2 café, with its acrylic cloud-shaped lighting. The building's slightly off-kilter charm is a perfect emblem for this neighborhood on the verge.

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CULTURAL CALENDAR

Spring Flings

Art, music and gastronomic tours de force are blossoming around the region. Here are the cultural events worth traveling for this season. BY **MONSICHA HOONSUWAN**

HONG KONG | Taste of Hong Kong | 3/10-13 | Joining the ranks of London, Paris and Rome, Hong Kong touts its gastronomic might by playing the first Asian host to the restaurant festival Taste. For four days, Central Harbourfront turns into a foodie's playground with 12 of the city's best eateries (think Aberdeen Street Social, Tosca and Yardbird) cooking up spring specials while oenophiles indulge in champagne, wine and sake tastings.

MARCH / 2016

JAPAN | Setouchi Triennale Spring Session | 3/20-4/17 | Every three years, some 12 islets in the Seto Sea unite as one expansive gallery of contemporary art from around the region.

SINGAPORE | International Jazz Festival | 3/4-6 | Joss Stone, Hiatus Kaiyote and Buena Vista Social Club are some of the crowd-pleasing 23 acts lined up this year at Marina Bay Sands Event Plaza.

HONG KONG | Art Basel | 3/24-26 | More than 3,000 international artists and 187 of the world's leading contemporary art galleries, half of which are based in Asia-Pacific, participate in this version of the renowned festival.

BANGKOK | The Respectables | 3/1-28 | British painter Richard Mead examines behaviors of people when faced with tricky situations, like a maître d' being confronted by demanding customers.

SOUTH KOREA | Jeonju International Film Festival | 4/28-5/7 | This year's lineup is still in the works, but it usually has a great selection of experimental films and has premiered new works by Harun Farocki and James Benning.

PALAWAN | Midsummer Night's Dream | 4/29 | Dance in paradise at Palawan's first ever outdoor EDM festival led by top DJs from around the country.

TAIPEI | Young Art Taipei | 4/23-24 | For the eighth year in a row, Sheraton Grande Taipei is partnering with Asian galleries to showcase contemporary pieces by young artists.

APRIL / 2016

BURMA | Burmese New Year | 4/11-20 | The holiday of Thingyan is Burma's new-year celebration, ushered in with a countrywide water fight.

MALAYSIA | Ballet Illuminations | 4/22-5/1 | Stunning performances by the lauded Singapore Dance Theatre troupe return to Penang on the 22nd and Kuala Lumpur on the 29th.

SYDNEY | *Manifesto* | 5/28-11/13 | A video installation by Julian Rosefeldt featuring Cate Blanchett staging 13 manifestos written by modern artists comes to the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

BEIJING | Art Beijing | 5/1-3 | One of China's most influential art fairs returns for the 11th year with a new photography section and greater emphasis on exhibitors from Japan and Korea.

MAY / 2016

SOUTHLAND | Bluff Oyster & Food Festival | 5/21 | Winter on New Zealand's southern coast means sumptuous oysters paired with Kiwi ales.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF TASTE OF HONG KONG; COURTESY OF MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM; BERNIE NG; COURTESY OF BLUFF OYSTER FESTIVAL; COURTESY OF RICHARD MEAD; DUNJA-DOPSAJ

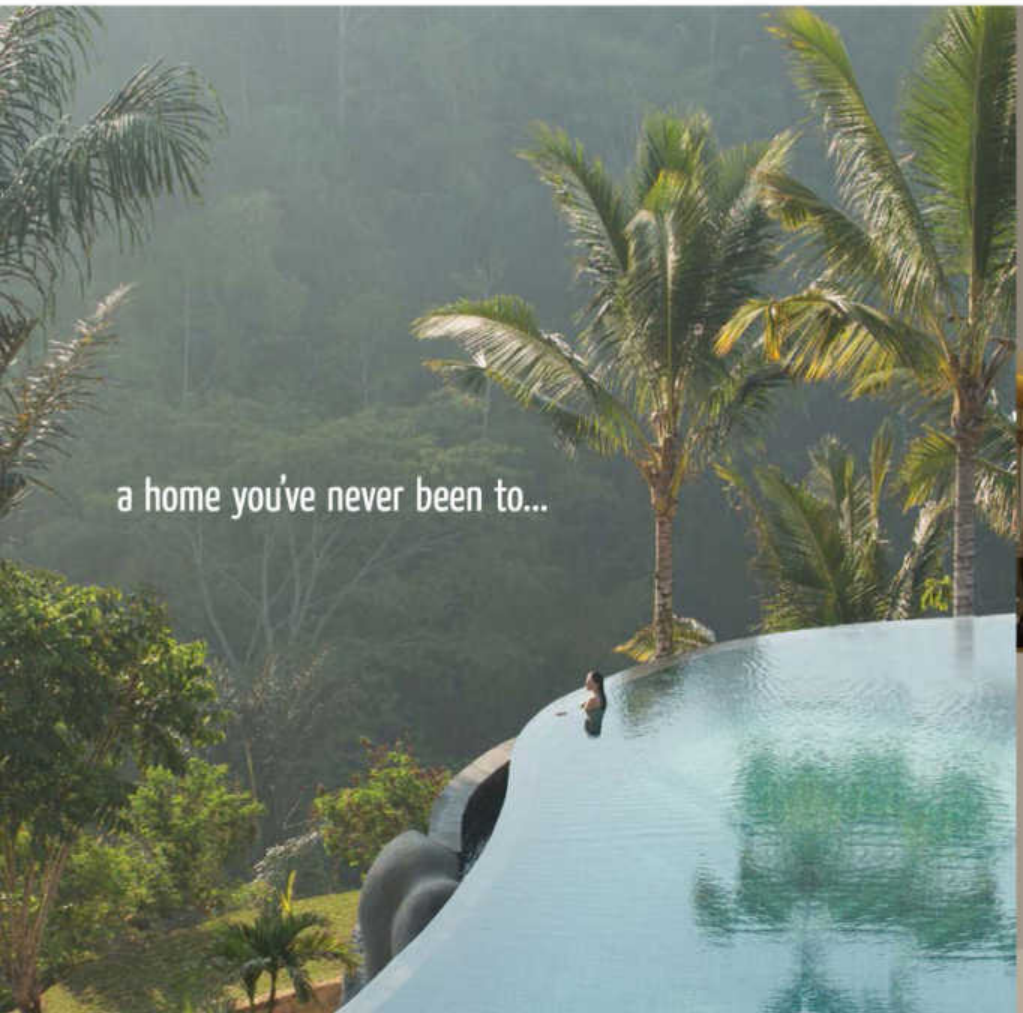
GOODS

Camilla's Kaftans

A FEW YEARS AGO, Australian fashion doyen Camilla Franks—creator of the colorful range of kaftans worn by A-listers like Oprah and Beyoncé—conjured a new way to style her flagship boutique on Sydney's Bondi Beach. "I wanted sand on the floor," Franks confides, "but the council wouldn't let me." This year, her vision came to fruition on Neo Beach—a strip of sand fronting the **One&Only Reethi Rah** resort *(oneandonlyresorts.com; doubles from US$1,850)* in the Maldives. Set in an A-frame hut, the sand-bottomed pop-up shop overflows with not only kaftans but shorts, swimsuits and jumpsuits from Franks's latest collection, inspired by her travels through Spain, Greece and Turkey. She says the property is "a perfect canvas for Camilla with that beach-to-the-bar vibe they have." If you can't make it there before the pop-up closes in May, you can shop online at camilla.com.au to have a little Maldivian magic shipped straight to your door. —IAN LLOYD NEUBAUER

Camilla Franks's colorful beachwear.

COURTESY OF CAMILLA FRANKS



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AFTER DARK

Nighthawks

After-hours Jakarta is heating up with new vodka bars, speakeasies and cocktail lounges that offer everything but an excuse to sleep.

BY **MERRITT GURLEY**

CLUBS

Of late, the club scene in Jakarta has been losing a little of its neon-lit luster. The timing couldn't be better for this newcomer, which offers a much-needed injection of fun... and vodka.

Revolution

Jakarta's club-hoppers will be lining up to knock 'em back at Revolution, slated to open this month. Calling itself a "vodka party bar," Revolution is looking to be part bottle service, part spectacle. The bartenders will juggle spirits, like a scene straight out of the movie *Cocktail*, and the waitresses will take regular dance breaks to pump up the party. If the staff's pep doesn't get you out on the dance floor, a few shots of 80-proof liquid courage will do the trick. *revolution-jakarta.com; vodka cocktails for two Rp350,000.*

SPEAKEASIES

Speakeasies first hit the Jakarta nightlife scene a few years ago with the opening of Nip & Dram and Bau-Haus 1933 *(bauhausjakarta.com)*, but in the past year two new additions are raising the stakes, and the ABV.

Hemingway Speakeasy Lounge & Cigar Bar

You have to know where you're going to find this covert cocktail joint, secreted behind the façade of Kingsman suit shop on Senopati. Once you've earned your stripes by hunting down the entrance, you'll be rewarded with live jazz music, an exhaustive cigar menu, and drams of premium scotch. *62-21/2904-3996; drinks for two Rp400,000.*

Prohibition

Bust out your cloche and trilby hats for an evening set in the Jazz Age. Prohibition really gets into the spirit of the roaring twenties, from the design—bronze fixtures and marquee lights—to the drink menu, with classics from the early 1900s like the Negroni and the vodka gimlet, and dangerous group-sized cocktails that play off underground rum-running with liter-sized mini-bathtubs of gin and 250-milliliter bootleg bottles served in buckets of ice. *prohibition.asia; drinks for two Rp260,000.*

LOUNGES

If speakeasies feel stuck in the past, these lounges offer a more modern setting.

Sea Grain

Opened last month in the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel Jakarta, Sea Grain has all the ingredients for the perfect after-work drink: a great view, happy-hour discounts, a solid drink selection and tons of tapas. *doubletree3.hilton.com; drinks for two Rp350,000.*

K22 Bar

This is one of three great drink options at the new Fairmont Jakarta. While View offers a dazzling lookout over the city and Barong Bar has a masculine charm, the outdoor space at K22 makes it our top pick. Located on the 22nd floor, the pub hovers over the skyline and clever design features add to the view—take the two island bars located on opposite sides of the outdoor deck, making it faster to get a drink. *fairmont.com; drinks for two Rp400,000.*

There are cocktail options galore at the new Fairmont Jakarta.

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SHOPPING

Casa Loewe

SAY *HOLA* TO SOUTHEAST Asia's first Casa Loewe. Opened in January at Singapore's Paragon mall, the new concept store *(above)* by the 170-year-old Spanish fashion house invites trendsetters to browse its luxury crafts in a homey atmosphere conceived by the brand's creative director Jonathan Anderson. Following the store's success in Tokyo and Madrid, this is Anderson's first foray into Southeast Asia, and he's trying to bring the brand's classic style to an intimate setting in Singapore. The design, with ornate touches like a green-agate ceiling, may be right out of Spain, but Anderson's latest collection reflects a recent trip to Japan—think manga comic-inspired menswear and sporty ladies' items. Although the new Casa Loewe is the third Loewe's shop in the nation-state, it's the region's only venue conceptualized by Anderson. It also stocks goods you can't find in other Loewe's stores, like a line of Singapore-only leather goods and fuller ranges of men's and women's clothing, bags and accessories. The unassuming space brimming with simple luxuries really says "*mi casa es su casa.*" *01-11/12 Paragon, 290 Orchard Rd., Singapore; loewe.com.* —M.H.

MUST-HAVES

Rain Check

FASHION EQUALS FUNCTION FOR SWEDISH LABEL STUTTERHEIM'S TAILORED, WATERPROOF COATS.

HEAD SPACE | Hoods are cut to maximize peripheral vision—"useful when biking or crossing the street," says cofounder Johan Loman.

GOOD FORM | The straight cut works for both men and women. "The shape evokes the traditional fisherman's raincoat, but with an updated, slimmer silhouette," Loman says.

MAKER'S MARK | Each coat is handmade using high-quality rubberized cotton, while elongated cuffs with double-welded seams help keep clothes dry.

IN LIVING COLOR | The lightweight coats come in classic hues like charcoal, black, green, white and navy. *stutterheim.com; from US$295.*
—LINDSEY OLANDER

FLIGHT PLAN

The first ever non-stop flight from London to Jakarta launches on March 31. **Garuda Indonesia** is flying the new route on a Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, five days a week, every day except Monday and Friday. For now, flying the other direction, from Jakarta to London, still will require a layover in Singapore.

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF LOWE; PHILIP FRIEDMAN (2). STYLIST: CHANEL KENNEBREW

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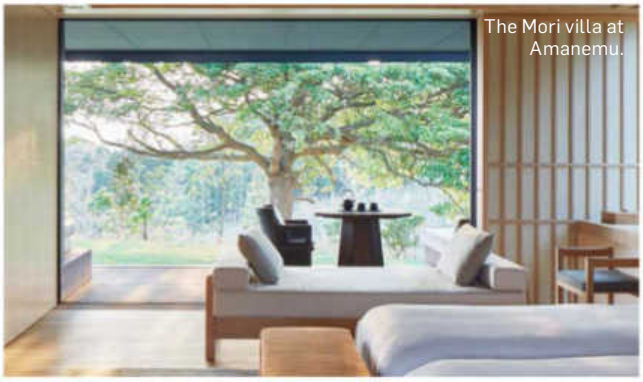
RECON

Robe Warriors

Across hectic cities, sleepy beach towns and cultural capitals, cool hotel openings are making it difficult for travelers to emerge from their robe-and-slipper cocoons. BY **DAVID NGO**

The President by Akaryn, Vientiane.

Shangri-La at the Fort, Manila.


The Mori villa at Amanemu.

Elements of Byron.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF THE PRESIDENT BY AKARYN; COURTESY OF SHANGRI-LA AT THE FORT, MANILA; COURTESY OF ELEMENTS OF BYRON; COURTESY OF AMANEMU

LAOS | THE PRESIDENT BY AKARYN

The 30-suite hotel takes up a central slice of Setthathirath Road in Vientiane, next to the National Assembly. The architecture is an elevated take on the popular Laos-accented colonial style, with luxury touches like stately colonnades and gilded chandeliers. The property soft-opens next month, welcoming visitors to explore the grounds, a lush mix of tasteful topiary and English country garden mazes. With its spacious rooms, white-gloved butlers and broad windows overlooking the impressive estate, the President is bringing a new level of refinement to Vientiane. *akaryn.com; doubles from US$300.*

PHILIPPINES | SHANGRI-LA AT THE FORT, MANILA

There's no real reason to leave the new Shangri-La at the Fort, Manila. The 567-room hotel is in a complex that has so many spots to wine, dine and shop that you may find yourself wanting to stay in. Fill up on delicious dishes at one of the 14 restaurants on site, like Canton Road, with its amazing Cantonese and Huaiyang food, or Raging Bull Chophouse & Bar, with its dynamite steaks, then sweat it out at the 2,000-square-meter Kerry Sports Manila fitness facility. This is one of the tallest towers in Manila, with views over the bay, so you can experience a panorama of the city from the comfort of your room. *shangri-la.com; doubles from P9,800.*

JAPAN | AMANEMU

Each of the 24 suites and four two-bedroom villas at this rural resort in Ise-Shima National Park features a large outdoor deck and an *onsen*, where guests can enjoy the balance-restoring Japanese ritual of soaking in nutrient-rich water from thermal springs. This is Aman's second property in Japan, and plays foil to the metropolitan Tokyo address with its emphasis on the quiet and verdant surrounds. Open the traditional woven-textile shutters in the Mori villa and you'll be looking out a floor-to-ceiling window framing a majestic *tabunoki* camphor tree that casts dappled shade over your personal courtyard. *aman.com; doubles from ¥90,000.*

AUSTRALIA | ELEMENTS OF BYRON

New restaurants and resorts are adding some bling to this beach town. Central to this change of scene is Elements of Byron Resort & Spa, a stylish seafront retreat that opened last month with 103 villas set on 22 hectares of Belongil Beach. As the name suggests, the whole look and feel of the place is inspired by the landscape, with a color palette reflecting the burnt oranges and deep blues of the coast. So it follows that protection of existing vegetation was a top priority during construction of the single-story villas, using low-impact buildings that curve with the horizon. *elementsofbyron.com.au; doubles from A$380, including Farmers' Market breakfast.*

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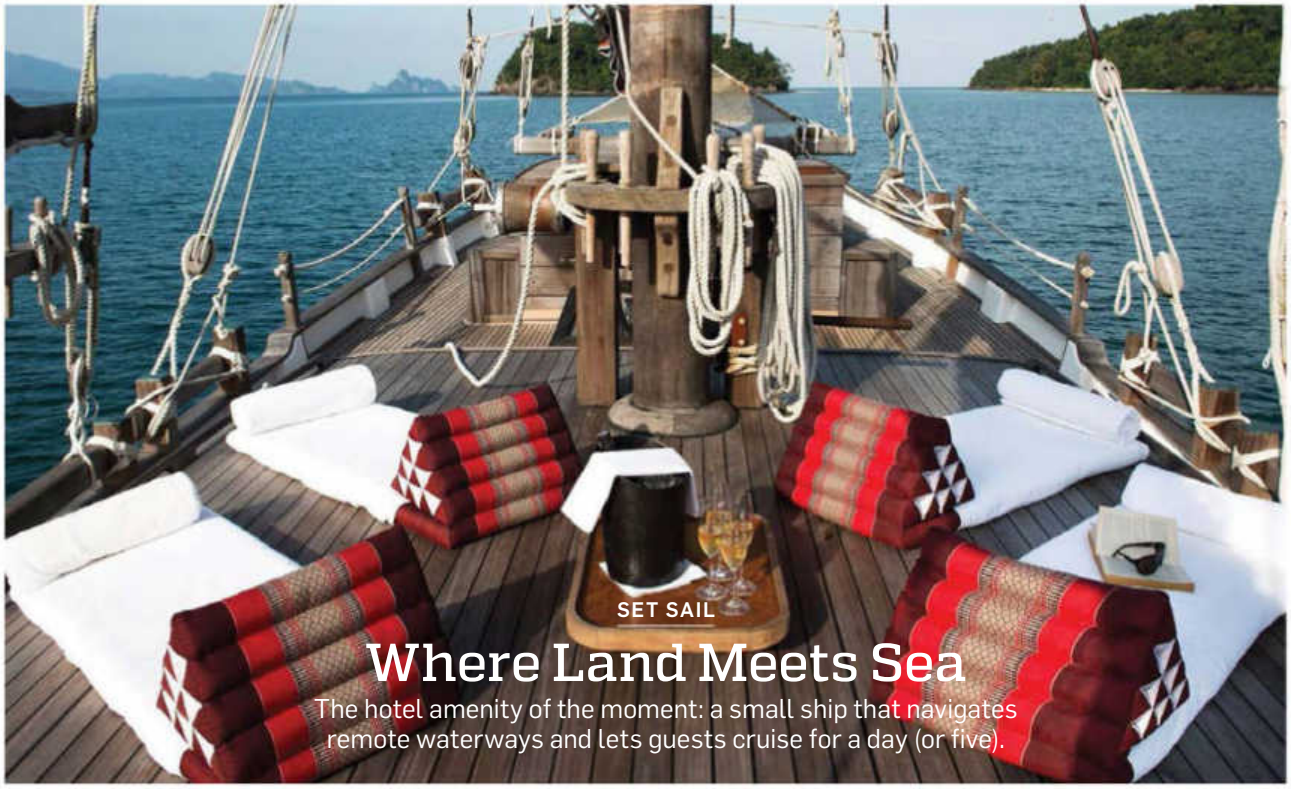

SET SAIL

Where Land Meets Sea

The hotel amenity of the moment: a small ship that navigates remote waterways and lets guests cruise for a day (or five).

FROM TOP: On the deck of the the Datai's *Naga Pelangi*; *Amandira* sets sail; the *Oberoi Philae* snakes through the Nile.

1 | *Oberoi Philae* | Egypt

ROUTE After a trip to Oberoi's Sahl Hasheesh beach resort, board this plush ship as it sails the Nile. HIGHLIGHTS The Temple of Edfu and the Valley of the Kings. MEAL PLAN Egyptian dishes like tapenade-crusted Nile perch. DETAILS *oberoihotels.com; from US$1,644 per night for two people, all-inclusive.*

2 | *Amandira* | Indonesia

ROUTE Amanwana resort's double-masted, five-cabin sailboat takes guests to see rare Komodo dragons. HIGHLIGHTS The dragons, and snorkeling among sharks and manta rays. MEAL PLAN Barramundi with turmeric, basil and rice. DETAILS *aman.com; five nights on the ship and two nights at the resort, from US$42,850 for two people, all-inclusive.*

3 | *Naga Pelangi* | Malaysia

ROUTE The Datai Langkawi guests can now venture to deserted Andaman Sea islands on this stunning three-bedroom schooner powered by billowing 20-meter red sails. HIGHLIGHT Swimming with clown fish. MEAL PLAN A refreshing post-swim lunch of marinated tomatoes, mint and feta. DETAILS *thedatai.com; four-hour cruise from US$127 per person, including lunch.*

4 | *The Luang Say* | Laos

ROUTE *The Luang Say*'s journey along the Mekong River from Luang Prabang to Huay Xai includes two nights at the colonial-style Luang Say Residence and one night at the rustic Luang Say Lodge, near Pakbeng. HIGHLIGHT An exploratory bike ride through the temple town of Luang Prabang. MEAL PLAN Traditional Lao cuisine both onboard and at local-favorite restaurants along the way. DETAILS *luangsay.com; four days, three nights, US$945 per person, all-inclusive.*

—EIMEAR LYNCH

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF THE DATAI LANGKAWI; COURTESY OF AMANDIRA; COURTESY OF OBEROI RESORTS & HOTELS

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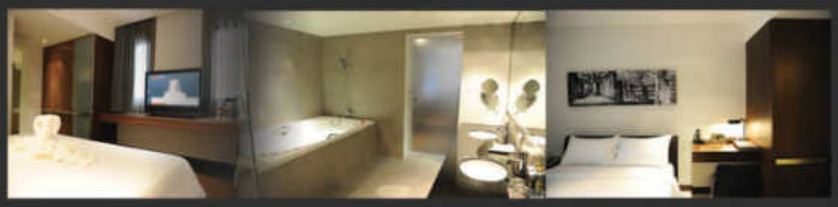

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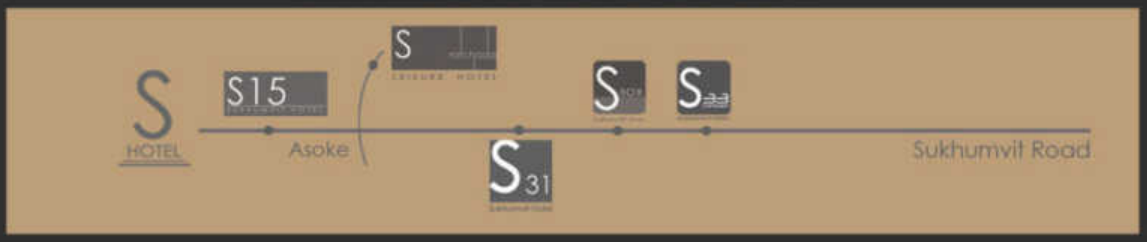

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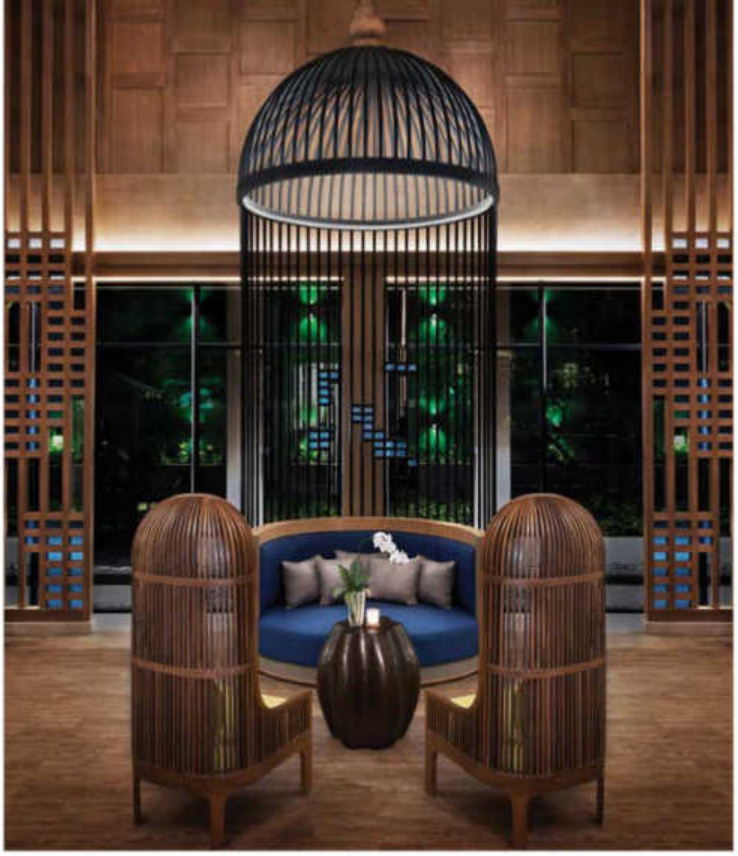
CHECKING IN

Sand Castles

The powdery shores of Phuket have seen their fair share of luxury digs, but a new wave of beach hotels is cresting above the rest. Here, **Ashley Niedringhaus** calls out the island's most compelling newcomers.



Manathai Surin

When the Manathai Surin owners enlisted the Thailand-based CDG design group, they wanted to integrate regional interior designs while avoiding the all-too-common pitfall of overloading the room with dark teakwood and Thai silk. The result: clean-lined, light-filled rooms that are tastefully Thai and not overwrought. Lotus ponds surround the resort's pool, and the pièce de résistance is the oversized birdcage sofa in the lobby, a nod to the Phuket custom of keeping nice-looking cages outside the home. The hotel's restaurant caters to mild-palated Westerners, but with a prime location on the upmarket Surin Beach, Phuket's best eateries are easily accessible. *manathai.com/phuket; doubles from Bt2,443.*

Fishermen's Harbour Urban Resort

The 390 spacious rooms have a relaxed weekend-away vibe and, despite their massive size, the property manages to mute the noise of nearby Patong to create a relaxing, family-focused retreat. Rooms play to the area's elements, with crisp white walls, marine blue accents and under-the-sea murals. Nearly 100 of the resort's rooms are designed with families in mind, including bunk beds and a separate living room, plus access to youngster-friendly amenities, like a kids' club, game room and bike rentals. Parents will enjoy the swim-up bar and well-appointed spa. The hotel's organic farm sources herbs and produce for the three restaurants, which serve everything from teppanyaki to Halal to Thai. *fishermensharbour.com; doubles from Bt7,500.*

FROM TOP: Birdcage chic at Manathai Surin; Reflections, The Nai Harn's 50-meter rooftop deck.

The Nai Harn

This property has had many acts in its 30-year-old lifespan, but high-end beachgoers will be flocking here for the new Côte d'Azur-meets-the-Andaman vibe courtesy of the cerulean blue water, whitewashed walls and accents of punchy on-trend Pantone colors. Last December, the resort emerged from an 18-month overhaul and nabbed the exclusive honor of being named the island's only member of The Leading Hotels of the World. Airy rooms with heavenly beds have private balconies with four-poster sunbeds overlooking Nai Harn Beach and Bay, >>

REBOOTS

BANYAN TREE

Who doesn't want to stay in their own private pool villa on an island vacation? It is the stuff of holiday dreams, and last year the Banyan Tree Phuket decided to answer the collective cry for a discreet dip by adding pools to all of their spacious villas. That's right, there is nary a dry lot in sight, and every one of their room categories comes with its own private pool for your lounging and paddling pleasure. The one-bedroom villas are perfect for couples, with en-suite bathrooms and his-and-hers dressing areas, while the two-bedroom villas are great for families—each comes with a big kitchen, cozy dining area, living room, two bedrooms and sliding glass doors opening onto a giant terrace with a sunken tub, a nine-meter swimming pool and lounge chairs aplenty. The Banyan Tree is set within the Laguna Phuket complex, where you can explore the many beaches, restaurants and bars that dot the enchanting enclave. ***banyantree.com; doubles from Bt12,240.***

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF MANATHAI SURIN; COURTESY OF THE NAI HARN; COURTESY OF BANYAN TREE

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and the swish service extends from beachside butlers to an in-villa button expressly for champagne. Fancy something other than bubbles? Try the Lady Nai Harn, a signature cocktail made with indigenous Chalong Bay Rum, which was crafted by legendary barman Salim Khoury of London's The Savoy Hotel, or peruse the wine list culled by expert James Suckling; you're bound to find a bottle you'll love. *thenaiharn.com; doubles from Bt7,900.*

Dream Phuket Hotel & Spa

This resort, with its youthful hospitality, eco-friendly attitude, in-pool bar with top-notch spirits, and trendy beach club manages to appeal to almost every segment of traveler. The newest outpost from the folks behind the ever-popping disco ball of a hotel Dream Bangkok is a seaside knockout north of Bangtao Beach peninsula. Feast at Trilogy, a three-part restaurant with offerings of Thai, Tuscan and contemporary European foods crafted by three world-class chefs, or puff on an imported cigar and sip wine at the leather-clad Indulge lounge. Head off property to the nearby Dream Beach Club, the hotel's tailor-made club on Layan Beach where in-house DJs spin beats and champagne flows freely. Looking for Phuket's young and trendy? This is where you'll find them Instagraming. *dreamhotels.com/phuket; rooms, suites and villas from Bt5,249, Bt8,903 and Bt23,147 respectively.*

Keemala

The design-centric Keemala, built into the forested hills just up from Kamala Beach, is a welcome alternative to the district's more traditional offerings. The 38 villas—grouped into cottages, tents, tree houses and bird's nests—draw upon tribal designs paired with posh perks, like private plunge pools, outdoor showers, and deep soaking tubs with sea views. Spend an afternoon at the organic Mala Spa, where signature treatments incorporate a wide array of essential oils. Honeymooners will find the proximity of neighboring villas to be a buzz kill to their privacy, but the staff is gracious, efficient and nearly invisible, so won't interfere with anyone's idyll. *keemala.com; doubles from Bt19,600.*

FROM TOP: Fish for flare at the Fishermen's Harbour; cottages with private pools at Keemala.

REBOOTS

AMATARA RESORT & WELLNESS

Reborn as the Amatara Resort & Wellness last October, the goal of the resort was to sharpen its focus on wellness and create a luxury destination spa on the island. After an extensive renovation, the expanded 2,000-square-meter spa is set to open this month and will include a salt relaxation room (to battle common allergies and asthma) and services that incorporate *rhassoul* clay, a mineral-rich clay that promotes detox. The standout of the wellness overhaul is adding the world's first Thai Hammam—a combination of Turkish baths and Thai treatments. The revamped resort's 105 rooms and villas remain unchanged and if you want to splurge, make sure to book one of the pool villas, which are the hotel's most spacious and feature private pools perfect for soaking up the sun and sea views. *amataraphuket.com; doubles from Bt12,200.*

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF FISHERMEN'S HARBOUR URBAN RESORT; COURTESY OF KEEMALA; COURTESY OF AMATARA RESORT & WELLNESS

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Cool Quarter

Alberto Chan, owner of a new concept store in Macau, is bringing the art of subtlety to the city's budding creative scene, but he's got an appetite for more than just great design. BY **JULIANA LOH**

Interior designer and owner of Quarter Square Alberto Chan. BELOW FROM LEFT: Ritz-Carlton Bar & Lounge; a veggie-packed pita at Blissful Carrot; window-shopping at Quarter Square concept store.

IT TOOK 15 YEARS FOR INTERIOR DESIGNER Alberto Chan to return home to Macau, and less than 12 months for him to make a mark on the gaming center. His understated creative voice is rising above the bellow of the mega casinos, the whisper everyone leans in to hear.

Chan spent almost two decades in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Hong Kong, and he's bringing some of the low-key cool of the urban centers to Macau with his brand-new concept store **Quarter Square** *(89 Largo Maia de Magalhães, Taipa; 853/2857-6914; quartersquare.co)*. The store held its grand opening in December and is shaking up Taipa's village scene, blooming in the middle of decades-old local diners and shops selling overpriced tourist knickknacks.

Soft-spoken and cheerful Chan says he is striving to "bring delightful, well-crafted design to everyone in Macau, one step at a time." He curates a selection of contemporary home décor from Europe, the U.S., Japan and Scandinavia and he's also developing his own collection of cushion covers. Customers can leisurely browse or sip Quarter Square's custom coffee blend at the espresso bar, part of Chan's vision of offering Macau locals "a platform for exchanging designs and ideas."

The New York Parsons's Golden Portfolio Award–winner goes for timeless elegance in every project by combining craftsmanship, comfort and functionality. Chan's past work at renowned design firms like Jonathan Adler and Tony Chi shines through in tasteful looks that reflect his love of nature, art and technology. You can also spot his signature style at restaurants across Macau like Papermoon, where he was commissioned to lead the interior design.

Chan is a strong supporter of local businesses and here he shares his favorite spots to eat, drink and hang out, choices influenced by both his upbringing in Macau and his international education in design. >>

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF ALBERTO CHAN; COURTESY OF BLISSFUL CARROT; COURTESY OF QUARTER SQUARE; COURTESY OF RITZ-CARLTON BAR & LOUNGE

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FUEL-UP FARE

+ Chan gets his coffee at **Beans Aloud**. "They are a small homegrown business and really put their heart into what they do." Pick from a variety of fresh coffee beans and they'll custom roast them on site. If you aren't sure what to choose, join one of their tastings or workshops to coax out your inner coffee aficionado. *6F Edifício Industrial Man Kei, 48 Av. do Coronel Mesquita; 853/6326-2625; coffee for two MOP80.*
+ For fresh juices, hearty salads and wraps, Chan frequents **Blissful Carrot**, just around the corner from his store. Need a healthy sweet fix? Try the carrot cake and the Blueberry Coconut Bliss smoothie. *fb.com/blissfulcarrot; lunch for two MOP200.*

At The Tasting Room. BELOW FROM LEFT: Peking duck at Beijing Kitchen; carefully crafted cocktails at Heart Bar.

LAID-BACK LUNCH

+ Hit up Chan's favorite hole-in-the-wall restaurant, **Cho Lon**, for "some of the best pho noodles and curry beef brisket in town." *Magnificent Court, 419 Av. Xian Xinghai; 853/2850-9200; lunch for two MOP200.*
+ Chan laments that there aren't that many great places to dine outside of the casino hotels, but when he needs a break from baccarat, he ducks into **Taipa Café,** where they serve European food that doesn't disappoint (even if the service still needs work). You can't go wrong with the meatballs. *Shop B, The Manhattan, R. de Nam Keng, Taipa; 853/2884-4075; lunch for two MOP600.*
+ Also outside of the confines of casino row is **Café Litoral**, a Macanese institution "definitely not celebrated enough for authentic classics" like *minchi*, a minced pork and beef dish with diced deep-fried potatoes; *tacho*, a winter Macanese meat stew; and African Chicken dressed in a thick peanut curry. *cafelitoral.com; dinner for two MOP400.*

SUNSET DRINKS

+ For an after-work cocktail, Chan recommends **Heart Bar** at Ascott for its beautiful interiors and cocktail selection. "The look is both modern and classic," he says. There's also an outdoor terrace where guests can enjoy a breezy sunset tipple. *the-ascott.com; drinks for two MOP150.*
+ Or if you'd like a view as dizzying as the drinks, **The Ritz-Carlton Bar & Lounge** on the 51st floor, offering a panoramic vista of the Cotai Strip, will have you reeling. Sample from the bar's very own gin trolley, serving one of the best gin and tonics in town, to cast a rosy glow upon the city's nightscape. *ritzcarlton.com; drinks for two MOP200.*

HAUTE DINNER

+ When he's in the mood for a high-end hangout, Chan suits up for two-Michelin-starred **The Tasting Room**. "It is a fully immersive experience that brings pleasure to the five senses, from the interiors to the choice of tableware, plating and music, and, of course, the food." *cityofdreamsmacau.com; lunch sets from MOP368.*
+ "I love the Peking duck at **Beijing Kitchen**. Their open kitchen where diners can see all the action is brilliant. Although if you sit for too long, the smoked fruit tree wood aroma gets on your hair and clothes." *macau.grand.hyattrestaurants.com; dinner for two MOP700.*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF THE TASTING ROOM BY GALLIOT; COURTESY OF HEART BAR AT ASCOTT; COURTESY OF GRAND HYATT MACAU

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One of the newly built suites at Le Domaine d'Ablon.

The Stuff of Fairy Tales

Parisian tastemakers are reinvigorating an old-fashioned corner of Normandy, adding modern flourishes to a rural French idyll.

BY **REBECCA ROSE** PHOTOGRAPHED BY **CÉLINE CLANET**

THE SUN HAD JUST SLIPPED DOWN between the apple trees, silhouetting a group of Normande cows against an orange-purple sky, as I foraged around a vegetable garden on my hands and knees. Yanking out a couple of radishes to add to my pannier of organic produce—turnips, broccoli, brussels sprouts and celeriac—I felt gratifyingly like a peasant in a Millet painting. Smoke from the chimney of La Petite Chaumière, the 16th-century thatched cottage we were staying in, mingled with fresh scents from the herb garden, where, alongside varieties of thyme, mint and sage, sat plants with even more-poetic-sounding labels: SARRIETTE, PIMPRENELLE and MÉLISSE. Beyond them, a moss-flanked path led to a latched front door, behind which a crackling fireplace glowed. The only thing missing was the Three Bears.

The Three Bears, however, didn't sauté their vegetables in high-end cook ware on a six-burner range, watch *The Amazing Spider-Man* on a giant flat-screen TV, or wallow in an Italian tub filled with Bulgari bubbles. Nor were they able to dial up a room-service *tarte aux pommes* and have it promptly delivered on a tray by the cottage's owner, Christophe Delaune. This was a children's-book fantasy, with bells on.

Delaune, 46, is the effervescent creator of Le Domaine d'Ablon, a group of new luxury *demeures*, or residences, in Normandy's Pays d'Auge. This undulating region, traditionally associated with cider, Calvados and Camembert, is home to the well-heeled seaside town of Deauville—to which Parisians have had easy access since the capital's Gare St.-Lazare opened in the mid 19th century. Deauville and its equally picturesque neighbor, Honfleur, are now established tourist honeypots (the latter attracts 3.5 million visitors per year) and, as is often the case with such places, have acquired something of a reputation for resting on their laurels.

Which is why Delaune, whose ambitious project is just a short drive from both towns by car, has set out to reinvigorate the area with his relaxed, modern take on hospitality. Guests are often surprised to see their host carrying luggage and delivering their morning *pain au chocolat*—especially when they discover that Delaune was, until recently, the president of a multimillion-dollar firm specializing in print management for retailers. After cashing out in 2011, Delaune wanted a change from his >>

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The lighthouse in Trouville. FROM TOP: Trouville's Villa Gypsy coffee shop, another innovative business to open in the area; a bathroom in one of the Grange suites at Le Domaine d'Ablon.

relentless 24/7 schedule, which had not provided enough time for him to indulge his real weakness: gardening. "Gardening is a dangerous passion for me. There are no limits," he said, with an infectious laugh. He went on to recount how when he lived in Aix-en-Provence, he spent €9.85 million on his 15-hectare garden, which in turn inspired him to host a Chelsea Flower Show–style event that drew 25,000 visitors in three days.

The concept for Le Domaine d'Ablon came to Delaune gradually, partly as a result of staying in luxury hotels while traveling for business, but also out of a desire to return home to his beloved Normandy (he grew up in Le Havre). La Petite Chaumière—a traditional Norman two-bedroom farmer's cottage that originally served as his country bolt-hole—was the obvious place to build on. So he and his wife left their penthouse in Paris's St.-Germain-des-Prés and drew up plans to construct two more classic Norman houses on their two hectares, adding a new home for themselves and a further two guest suites to the site of the original 16th-century building. The resulting new buildings, with their immaculately thatched roofs and oak beams, are virtually indistinguishable from the original country cottage.

The idea is for guests to have their own private living space and garden—quite a departure from the typical high-end hotel experience in France, which can be formal to the point of stuffiness. "Many people staying in five-star hotels don't like to mix with others," Delaune said. "They don't want to be surrounded." With a capacity for only eight guests so

far, the atmosphere is resoundingly peaceful—no chance of being snapped by an iPhone here.

Guests are encouraged to help themselves to produce from the *potager* (kitchen garden), but can also order from the property's room-service menu, a non-dietetic repertoire of creamy Norman dishes prepared by chef-pâtissier Jérôme Billochon. Delaune said he recently hosted a group of CEOs from Paris who delighted in picking their own vegetables and a Parisian family who foraged for their own chestnuts to roast on the fire. "The more successful and busy you are, the more you look for the simple things in life."

Delaune has grand plans for the Domaine. He aims to build a "typical Norman village" of 12 houses, all in the local style. A village, that is, with extras: a 20-by-6-meter indoor pool is planned for 2017, followed by an orangery, a business center and a restaurant by 2020. It is quite a project—and a boon for this rural corner of Normandy, without doubt.

He isn't the only one shaking things up in the area. Down in Deauville, on a drizzly off-season Thursday lunchtime, there was a buzz under the awnings of Charlo, a newfangled butcher/rotisserie that opened last summer. The *patron* is Charles Agniel, a smiley former lawyer from Paris who, like so many Parisians, has been weekending in Deauville for years. His concept is as fresh as the free-range meat behind the counter inside: a butcher offering meat from humanely treated animals—Angus beef, chicken from Landes—combined with a rotisserie restaurant, serving the same meat cooked with sides of home-cut *frites*, *gratin dauphinois* and ratatouille, all made at the restaurant from fresh, seasonal ingredients.

Agniel was inspired by the market in neighboring Trouville, where fishmongers serve customers *sur place* with oysters and a glass of chilled champagne. The ambience at Charlo is modern and masculine—upbeat music, counter seating, and a bar and smoking room for private parties. It is a little bit of Paris, and a pleasing contrast to the region's typical brasserie fare. Agniel plans to open branches across France, and in Dubai and South America.

Just across Deauville's central Place de Morny is another markedly modern establishment: a beautifully presented *boulangerie*-patisserie called Yvonne. Just as Ladurée reinvented the macaron, Yvonne has breathed life into that most overlooked of French pastries, the éclair. Under vintage, cloche-hat-style lampshades was an artful display of creations in more than a dozen different *parfums*, from passion fruit to salted caramel. Yvonne looks like it belongs in the Seventh Arrondissement, rather than downtown Deauville. >>

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The herb garden at Le Domaine d'Ablon.

Despite these green shoots of regeneration, it would be misleading to suggest that Normandy's pleasures are solely to be found in the new. The region has long been known as horse country, thanks to the prestigious races at Deauville, along with a number of internationally famous stud farms. The Deauville yearling auctions—the sale of promising thoroughbred year-old horses—always attract a glitzy crowd, and one of the activities Christophe Delaune has secured for his guests at the Domaine is a private visit to an *haras*, or stud farm—an experience usually off-limits to visitors.

Haras du Hoguenet, a family-owned farm nestled in verdant horse *terroir* 50 minutes from the Domaine, currently houses four famous stallions. We were given a sneaky tour by the stud manager, Anthony Baudouin, a tall, patrician Frenchman who once raced horses himself. Montmartre, a resplendent 10-year-old gray Grand Prix de Paris winner, now retired, was brought out to meet us. There was a ripple of excitement among our group as he was walked around the courtyard; not only is Montmartre a prizewinning thoroughbred but he has mated with 186 mares this year, and fathered a total of four champion racehorses.

This exclusive equine world is usually the preserve of buyers, breeders, trainers and racers, so it was thrilling to be taken for a ride along the vast sands of Deauville beach by a former racehorse. Not that I saddled up—I was sitting safely behind in what's known as a sulky, an old-fashioned horse cart, driven by an expert handler. In a group of four horses and sulkies, we sped, clattering, down the three-kilometer sandy beach, darting in and out of the low tide, while our drivers bellowed instructions against the wind. It was an exhilarating hint at the potential of these beautiful creatures, and one that didn't require any expertise on my part. I stepped out of the stirrups invigorated, lungs filled with sea air.

Back at the Domaine that evening, I discussed the state of the nation with Delaune, in his cathedral-ceilinged library filled with thousands of books. France, he reminded me, is the most visited country in the world, with over 80 million tourists arriving each year—yet the French hotel industry, in his view, is frozen in time. Too much formality, not enough thought or creativity. He, on the other hand, is thinking big. "Imagine creating a typical village like this in each region of France, with each different cuisine, culture and architecture," he said. "France is sitting on a pot of gold!" If all goes according to plan, Delaune may yet find himself conveniently positioned at the end of the rainbow.

THE DETAILS

HOTEL

Le Domaine d'Ablon This countryside property comprises two luxurious suites and a self-contained cottage; service is impressively intimate, from dial-up apple tarts to a pick-your-own vegetable garden. *domaine dablon.com; suites from €350.*

WHERE TO EAT

Charlo A butcher shop and rotisserie serving Angus steaks and tasty spit-roasted chicken. *29 Rue Breney, Deauville; 33-2/31-88-36-96; mains €10–€29.*

La Fleur de Sel Chef Vincent Guyon's Honfleur restaurant mixes seasonal local ingredients with a dash of the exotic. *lafleurdesel-honfleur.com; prix fixe from €30.*

La Poissonnerie Pillet-Saiter A traditional shop run by sixth-generation fishermen in Trouville's famous market. A trip to Normandy is not complete without experiencing the *soupe de poisson. poissonnerie-pilletsaiter.fr.*

La Terrasse des Ammonites Watch the sun go down with small plates and a glass of something chilled at this seafront restaurant and bar. *Rue des Lais de Mer, Bénerville; 33-2/31-88-40-33; small plates €9–€16.*

Les P'tits Sucrés This year-old *salon de thé* has quickly acquired a reputation for its spectacular salted-butter-caramel crêpes. *38 Rue des Bains,Trouville; 33-2/31-89-06-30.*

Villa Gypsy The mother-and-daughter team behind this airy little coffee shop in downtown Trouville serves delicious pastries and superb flat whites. *villagypsy.fr.*

Yvonne Choose from more than a dozen flavors of éclair, like pistachio, *speculoos* and lemon. *Deauville; yvonne-patisserie.com.*

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it list 2016

Each year, *Travel + Leisure* checks in to hundreds of buzzy new properties, but only a select few earn a place on the It List, our annual editors' choice awards. What sets these 49 winners apart: a refreshing take on service and design, an uncharted location, or enough glitz and glamour to make a classic destination feel fresh again. In short, these are hotels worth traveling for. Here, 20 of our favorites.

THE SCENE MAKER
SOHO HOUSE
ISTANBUL

Hotels have been opening in Istanbul at quite a clip lately. But none captures the energy of the city quite like the Soho House in Beyoğlu, set in a cluster of buildings that includes the former American Embassy. The inlaid wood and gilded interiors had been hiding under drywall and white paint; now, they embellish a private club for members and hotel guests, with three restaurants, a speakeasy-style bar and a rooftop pool, where a glittering crowd smokes and air-kisses into the night. The rooms, in a new structure across a pretty courtyard, impress on their own: warm, tactile cocoons of dark wood layered with beautiful textiles. Think of them as a necessary respite from the formidable chic next door, so close and yet so far. *sohohouse istanbul.com; doubles from US$272.*

TOM PARKER

THE ZEN MASTER | PHUM BAITANG

SIEM REAP

Angkor Wat tops many a bucket list, but the crowds can make seeing the temple a frenetic experience. Siem Reap's latest resort, with 45 villas on stilts amid lemongrass fields and rice paddies, puts a serene, five-star spin on the area's traditional wooden farmhouses: each suite has an indoor and an outdoor sitting area, a deep soaking tub and panoramic forest views. Continue your cultural immersion with a coconut-milk massage at the seven-room spa, modeled on the area's UNESCO-designated temples, or a crash course on Khmer cuisine at restaurant Bay Phsar. *phumbaitang.com; doubles from US$463.*

THE INDIE DARLING
HOTEL EMMA

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Some are calling San Antonio Texas's next capital of cool—and Hotel Emma is at the center of it all. A brewery turned hotel sounds like a hipster cliché, but this showstopper advances the industrial-chic aesthetic. Its 146 character-packed rooms have original stonework and vaulted ceilings, along with an urban edge (exposed steel window frames). The Emma also fits in with its epicurean neighbors: the on-site larder stocks breads from nearby Bakery Lorraine, the restaurant draws from the biweekly farmers' market and throwback iceboxes in each room hold the fixings for margaritas. Be sure to hit the bar Sternewirth—the former watering hole for brewery workers, which dates to 1883—where old fermentation tanks double as banquette seats. *thehotelemma.com; doubles from US$276.*

THE DESIGN STAR | CASA FAYETTE

GUADALAJARA, MEXICO

Grupo Habita, Casa Fayette's owner, has a knack for creating buzz around Mexican destinations. This time, the company has anointed Guadalajara the next "it" city—specifically Colonia Americana, a bougainvillea-covered neighborhood of galleries and restaurants. Housed in a 1940s Art Deco mansion, the 37-room property has been given an avant-garde remodel by local firm Estudio5. The interiors mix serious design pieces with whimsical, retro touches. Chairs in the bar are upholstered in a palm-tree print and are dripping in gold tassels; the bathrooms are wall-to-wall marble lit by Midcentury fixtures. Come Saturday night, a who's who stops by the dramatically lit bar. *casafayette.com; doubles from US$195.*

GRID: COURTESY OF PHUM BAITANG (9). FROM TOP: NICOLE FRANZEN; UNDINE PRÖHL

THE NAKA ISLAND
RESORT & SPA
PHUKET

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THE CULTURE MAGNET | FAENA

MIAMI BEACH

Developer Alan Faena tasked Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin with helping him reimagine the historic Saxony Hotel, the anchor of his six-block-long cultural district. The result? A surreal mash-up evocative of late-period Gianni Versace and the Moulin Rouge. The lobby has eight Juan Gatti murals, including neo-Baroque images of skulls and horses. In the garden is Damien Hirst's *Gone But Not Forgotten*, a giant 24-karat-gold-gilded woolly-mammoth skeleton. Los Fuegos, Francis Mallmann's first U.S. project, serves a rib eye with chimichurri that transcends the hype. And the guest rooms are over the top, with red velvet armchairs and turquoise carpeting. Up next is an arts center by Rem Koolhaas/OMA. Brace yourself, America: the FaenaLand invasion has begun. *faena.com; doubles from US$899.*

THE NEW GRANDE DAME | COTTON HOUSE HOTEL

BARCELONA

If a city hotel could ever mimic the why-bother-going-out feeling of a resort, it would be the Cotton House. Set in a 19th-century Neoclassical landmark—once the Cotton Producers Guild—the 83-room gem from Autograph Collection has been deftly reinvented by designer Lázaro Rosa-Violán. His preservation of many original features, like the spiral staircase, tiled floors and intricately carved ceilings, gives the lobby a sense of history. The location by the boutiques of Passeig de Gràcia is another plus. Nonetheless, we saw guests content to stay on-property, lounging by the rooftop pool and reading in the library. *hotelcottonhouse.com; doubles from €260.*

THE BEACH BABE | ONE&ONLY OCEAN CLUB

PARADISE ISLAND, BAHAMAS

When A&P heir Huntington Hartford II conceived his Bahamian retreat a half-century ago, it's unlikely that he could have pictured guests arriving in Bentleys with Wi-Fi. But times have changed—and so has this property, following a partial but impactful face-lift. The most exciting addition is the oceanfront infinity pool, where couples sip elderflower martinis from butler-serviced chaises. The 52 rooms in the original Hartford Wing were also enlarged and redone; the colonial-style décor was swapped out for clean-lined furnishings and blue-and-cream hues. Hartford would definitely have approved. *oneandonlyresorts.com; doubles from US$1,035.*

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF COTTON HOUSE HOTEL; COURTESY OF FAENA HOTEL MIAMI BEACH; COURTESY OF ONE&ONLY OCEAN CLUB

BOROBUDUR | BROMO | CANGGU | CILANDAK | DHARMAWANGSA | KOMODO
MENJANGAN - WEST BALI NATIONAL PARK | PRIVATE CRUISES | SUMBA | TUGU - PUNCAK | UBUD

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HOTELS & RESORTS

THE SECRET ESCAPE
BARBUDA BELLE
BARBUDA

There are no planes in the sky, no big boats on the horizon and no sounds but wind and waves at the remote paradise of Barbuda Belle. You arrive by boat to Antigua's under-the-radar sister island, where six bamboo bungalows are splayed out along a pristine beach. After a few days spent kayaking among the mangroves, bird-watching at the nearby frigate sanctuary and lying on the pink sands, you'll realize exactly what you've found: perhaps the most untouched hiding place among the increasingly developed Caribbean islands. *barbudabelle.com; doubles from US$1,190.*

THE TROPICAL FANTASY
ANDBEYOND BENGUERRA ISLAND
MOZAMBIQUE

Luxury resorts have been moving in to the Bazaruto Archipelago—a 1,400-square-kilometer protected marine park off the coast of Mozambique—and after a yearlong overhaul, andBeyond Benguerra Island has emerged as the best of the bunch. The 13 stand-alone, thatched-roof suites, which sit by the water's edge, stylishly pay homage to the area's Afro-Arabic-Portuguese roots with mahogany four-poster beds and hand-painted tiles depicting animal scenes. Order a private picnic or go diving at Two-Mile Reef. Just sitting with a cocktail at the beach bar—a converted dhow—is also perfectly acceptable. *andbeyond.com; doubles from US$1,530, all-inclusive.*

THE INSIDER HANGOUT
HALCYON HOUSE
CABARITA BEACH, AUSTRALIA

How did a surf center of 3,000 people become the Hamptons of Australia? Ask Elisha and Siobhan Bickle, whose 21-room inn has fueled a boomtown roughly one hour north of Sydney. Each room has details like salvaged hardware, handpicked antiques and walls upholstered in blue-and-white-patterned textiles. They also have Frette robes, champagne in the minibars and, in many cases, deep soaking tubs. Bonus: guests get VIP access to Paper Daisy, the seafood restaurant, whose chef hails from Noma. *halcyonhouse.com.au; doubles from A$550.*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: J RAINEY/COURTESY OF BARBUDA BELLE; COURTESY OF ANDBEYOND; COURTESY OF HALCYON HOUSE; JULIE BALSIGER/COURTESY OF THE HOUSE HOTEL CAPPADOCIA

THE RUSTIC CHARMER | THE HOUSE HOTEL
CAPPADOCIA, TURKEY

The first thing that distinguishes The House Hotel is its location in Ortahisar, a picturesque village off Cappadocia's main tourist track. Gone is the stuffy, museum-like quality found in many of the region's properties: the 29 understated guestrooms deftly blend past and present, with frescoes and

THE NEW KID ON THE RIVER | MANDAPA

UBUD

With an entrance perched 100 meters above the Ayung River, this addition to the Ubud resort landscape is definitely set apart from the increasingly busy and buzzy town. At river level, guests are made to feel like they're in their own Balinese village—the rice terraces and flowing water make that a certainty. The resort's villas and suites aim to further that sense of seclusion. One-bedroom villas—whether on the rice fields, the river or next to the lush, green forest that surrounds Mandapa—all come with 30-square-meter private pools. Practice yoga, ride a bike, read a book or explore what it's like to live in this Balinese village, you're never short of diversions in this scenic sweep of Ubud. *ritzcarlton.com; doubles from Rp5,850,000.*

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF MANDAPA , A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE; PORNSAK NA NAKORN (4)

fifth-century natural stone walls alongside rain showers and heated Turkish-marble floors. The designers know you're going to be outside exploring the iconic fairy chimneys—and yes, you should take one of those now-ubiquitous hot-air-balloon rides—which is why many of the rooms have fireplaces and tubs to take off the chill. At check-in, ask for a crisp glass of white wine made from Emir, a grape native to the region. *thehousehotel.com; doubles from €169.*

THE STATEMENT PIECE

THE SOUTH BEACH SINGAPORE

Near both Raffles and the Fairmont, The South Beach is a welcome foil to its more traditional neighbors. The 654 rooms are spread across two buildings linked by a futuristic, Foster & Partners–designed canopy; the brightly colored interiors are by Philippe Starck; and the all-day dining room riffs on Singapore's famed hawker stalls. Here, technology drives hospitality: you can order room service from your TV and free ultrafast Wi-Fi is a given. You may roll your eyes at the silly names for, well, everything (it's not a lobby—it's a Global Village), but take the elevators—"exploratory vehicles," as one staffer called them—to the Sky Garden and you'll discover the most #trending rooftop bar in town. *thesouthbeach.com.sg; doubles from S$425.*

THE MOUNTAIN HIGH
INKATERRA HACIENDA URUBAMBA

SACRED VALLEY, PERU

The Sacred Valley, with its lush panoramas and impressive ruins, has typically played third fiddle to Cuzco and Machu Picchu, in part because there have been few luxe places to stay. But now Inkaterra provides a reason to stop and linger awhile. Its 36 rooms are an homage to Andean craftsmanship, with exposed eucalyptus beams and handmade furniture. When you're not lying in bed, staring agape at the forested countryside and surrounding mountains, you can tour nearby ruins like Ollantaytambo or visit the property's four-hectare farm, where lima beans and medicinal herbs are grown for use in the restaurant. A standout on the excellent menu is the *pastel de choclo*: corn cakes with guinea-pig *ragù*. *inkaterra.com; doubles from US$838.*

THE URBAN OASIS | MANDARIN ORIENTAL

MARRAKESH, MOROCCO

In a city associated with sensory overload, the Mandarin Oriental—set amid 20 hectares of olive trees, roses and palms—is a breath of fresh air. Instead of *zellige* tiles and gilded accents, the 54 villas have *riad*-inspired courtyards with all-white furniture and heated plunge pools. But they still feel Moroccan. Inside, you'll find Berber rugs, silver tea sets and steam showers. The nine suites have Atlas Mountain views, and even the smallest clock in at 135 square meters. Elsewhere on site, there's an organic garden that supplies 94 (yes, 94!) varieties of tomatoes and assorted vegetables to three restaurants. If all else fails to soothe your senses, order a nightcap and stargaze outside your villa as the scent of jasmine wafts by on the breeze. *mandarinoriental.com; doubles from €750.*

THE CITY SLICKER
THE HOXTON

AMSTERDAM

These days, everyone wants to cater to monied millennials. The Hoxton manages to do just that—without alienating anyone else—with its own youthful breed of hospitality. Want tickets to the Van Gogh Museum? A staffer will show you a hard-to-find website for VIP access. Want breakfast in bed? Hang a paper bag outside your door, and it'll be loaded up with fruit and yogurt by morning. And if you feel like the DIY spirit is incongruous with the stunning rooms—some with ornamented ceilings and canal views—think again. The Hoxton knows that those who march to their own tune can still appreciate a good Brunello. *thehoxton.com; doubles from €199.*

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF MANDARIN ORIENTAL, MARRAKECH; COURTESY OF THE HOXTON (9).
OPPESITE: COURTESY OF INKATERRA HACIENDA URUBAMBA

THE ICON REBORN | THE LANESBOROUGH

LONDON

After an 18-month renovation that cost a rumored £49 million, this Knightsbridge landmark is somehow more grand than before. Under the watch of Oetker Collection, the austere Regency building was practically gutted and filled back up with crystal chandeliers, parquet floors and antiques. The opulence extends to the 93 rooms, each with 18th-century paintings and mahogany writing desks. Afternoon tea at Céleste is an exercise in old-school finesse, where polished staff deliver warm scones and cucumber sandwiches on floral bone china. The only indication that you're in the year 2016 is that your butler can be summoned at any hour of the day—via iPad. *lanesborough.com; doubles from £490.*

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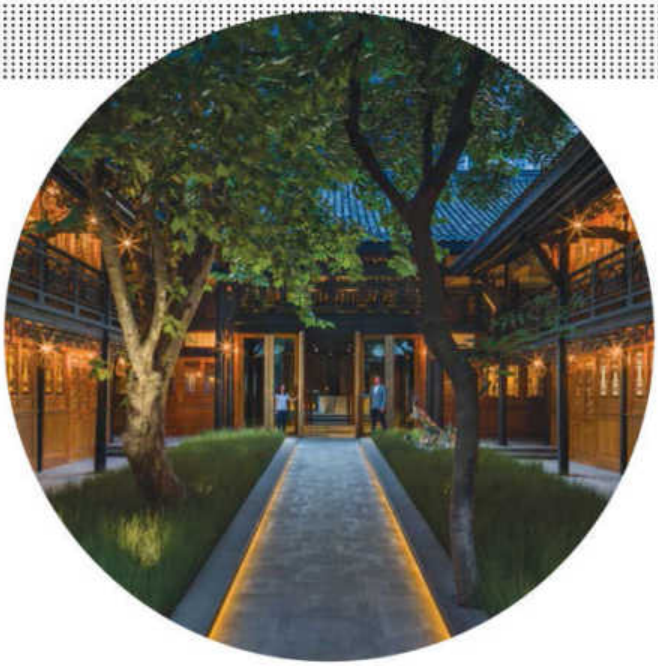
THE WILD ONE
ANGAMA MARA
MASAI MARA, KENYA

Perched on the edge of an escarpment overlooking the Masai Mara, the 30-suite Angama Mara has one of the world's most spectacular settings: it's where *Out of Africa* was filmed some 30 years ago. The place was designed so guests feel they are floating in air; you could easily spend all day in your beautifully appointed room—a modern take on adventure chic. But owners Nicky and Steve Fitzgerald, who helped build andBeyond into a safari powerhouse, have hired expert guides to tempt you onto the Mara plain below, where you can get up close and personal with the region's diverse wildlife. *angama.com; US$825 per person, per night.*



THE HISTORY BUFF
THE TEMPLE HOUSE CHENGDU

Incorporating bamboo, timber, brick and stone, The Temple House aims to meld the area's rich culture with contemporary design. Several Chinese courtyards and a Qing dynasty building go a long way towards accomplishing that goal. Within this complex are 100 guestrooms, each with light oak interiors and fitted with custom-made furniture, including Chinese screens. Mi Xun is a spa that doubles as an urban oasis with its focus on holistic wellness treatments. Set in a former monastery, the spa's location is like nowhere else in Chengdu, and integral to its facilities is the Tea House at Mi Xun, with organic teas chosen to complement soothing spa treatments. *thetemplehouse.com; doubles from RMB2,059.*

GRID: TOP LEFT AND MASAI WARRIORS: COURTESY OF ANGAMA MARA. OTHERS IN GRID: AMBROISE TÉZENAS. BOTTOM: COURTESY OF TEMPLE HOUSE

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THE RISK TAKER
PUMPHOUSE POINT
LAKE ST. CLAIR, TASMANIA

If you build it, they will come. So thought Tassie entrepreneur Simon Currant, who had the crazy idea to transform a derelict 1940s hydroelectric station, set deep in Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair National Park, into an 18-room hotel. Stay in the Midcentury-inspired Pumphouse—dramatically set at the edge of a 240-meter pier—or in the Art Deco-style Shorehouse. Most guests rise early to go trout fishing or to walk the trails in search of pygmy possums, wallabies and wombats. At night, everyone grabs glasses of local Pinot from one of the two honesty bars, and then swaps stories over celebratory communal feasts. *pumphousepoint.com.au; doubles from A$280.*

STU GIBSON/COURTESY OF PUMPHOUSE POINT

IT LIST 2016 WINNERS

ASIA & THE SOUTH PACIFIC
AHILYA BY THE SEA Goa
MANDAPA, A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE Ubud
PHUM BAITANG Siem Reap
THE SOUTH BEACH Singapore
THE TEMPLE HOUSE Chengdu

AUSTRALIA
HALCYON HOUSE Cabarita Beach
LIZARD ISLAND Great Barrier Reef
THE OLD CLARE HOTEL Sydney (see page 23 for more)
PUMPHOUSE POINT Lake St. Clair, Tasmania

EUROPE
ARCTIC LIGHT HOTEL Rovaniemi, Finland
ASHFORD CASTLE Lough Corrib, Ireland
BATTY LANGLEY'S London
COTTON HOUSE HOTEL, AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION Barcelona
DOMAINE DES ETANGS Massignac, France
THE GAINSBOROUGH Bath, England
HÔTEL DES GALERIES Brussels
THE HOUSE HOTEL Cappadocia
THE HOXTON Amsterdam
JW MARRIOTT Venice
LA FIERMONTINA Lecce, Italy
LA GRANDE MAISON Bordeaux,
THE LANESBOROUGH London
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CARIBBEAN
AMANERA Playa Grande, Dominican Republic
BARBUDA BELLE Barbuda
ONE&ONLY OCEAN CLUB Paradise Island, Bahamas

AFRICA & THE MIDDLE EAST
ANDBEYOND BENGUERRA ISLAND Mozambique
ANGAMA MARA Masai Mara, Kenya
BROWN BEACH HOUSE Tel Aviv
MANDARIN ORIENTAL Marrakesh, Morocco
SINGITA EBONY LODGE Sabi Sand Game Reserve, South Africa
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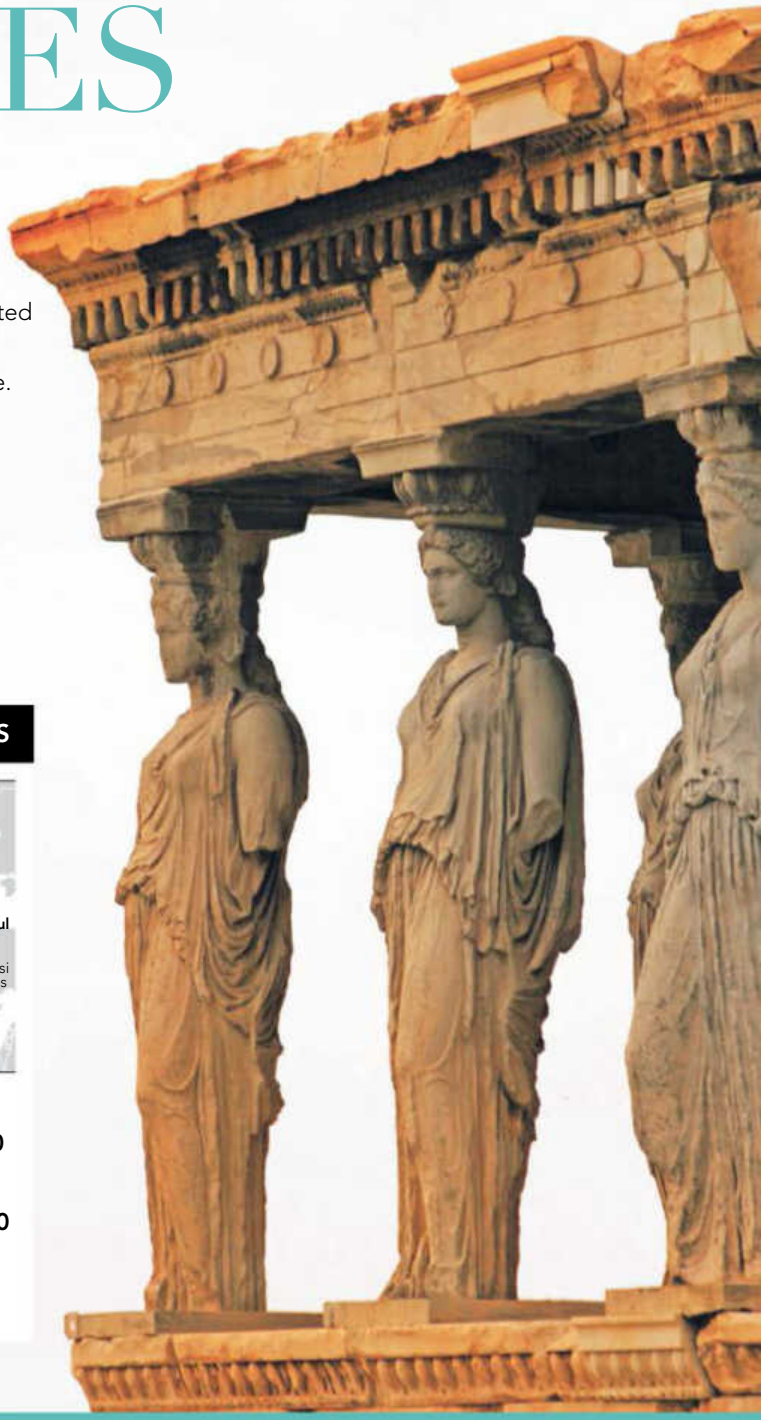

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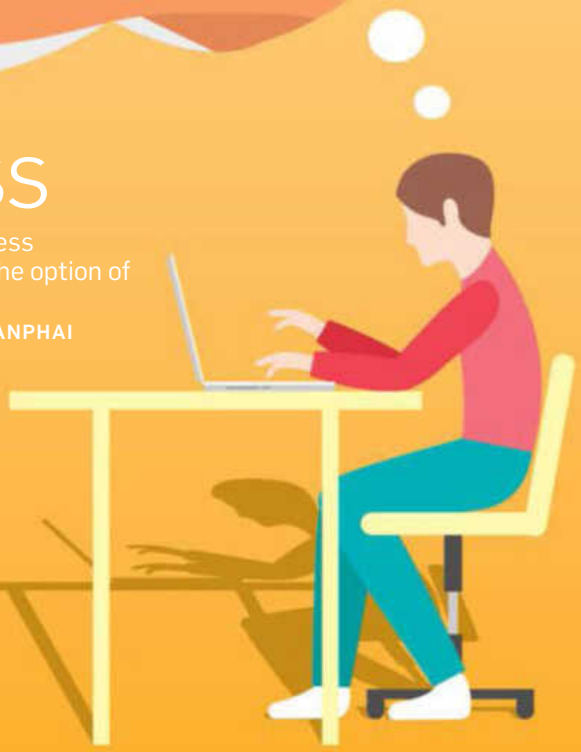
Bid for Business

Want to ditch cramped seats and tiny trays for business class? More airlines are giving passengers the option of bidding for a seat upgrade at a fraction of the cost.

BY **DIANA HUBBELL** ILLUSTRATIONS BY **AUTCHARA PANPHAI**



SPINDLY ARMRESTS, CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT legroom, a dreaded middle seat—the aggravations of flying economy class are many. In the past, the only alternatives were to shell out for pricey first or business class, to cash in frequent-flyer miles, or to foster a relationship with a single airline with the hope that one day, your loyalty might be rewarded. Unfortunately, free upgrades >>

for high-flying regulars are few and farther between than ever. Airlines have begun filling empty seats by offering them to the highest bidder. Before a flight, passengers either receive an e-mail informing them that they have the option to compete for premium economy, business- or first-class seats or can check for the option on the airlines' website. If your bid is successful, you'll receive notification usually between 72 and 24 hours in advance. Minimum bids range from less than US$10 to a few thousand dollars, and you're only charged if the bid is successful. The airlines make an extra buck and you can fly in comfort for less. Here's how to maximize your chances of an upgrade.

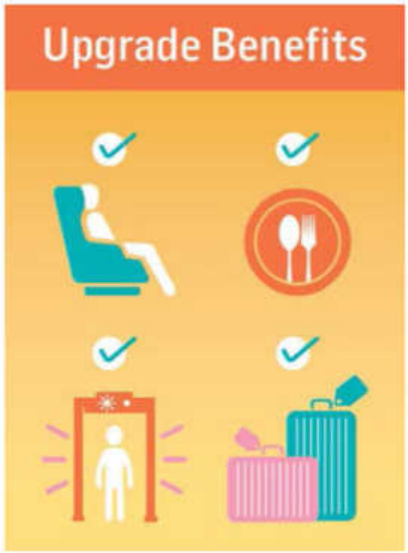
CHOOSE YOUR AIRLINE CAREFULLY AND READ THE FINE PRINT

Although bidding wars are an increasingly common feature, not all airlines offer them. If you're hoping for an upgrade within Asia Pacific, try booking on SriLankan Airlines, Malaysian Airlines, Lufthansa, Garuda Indonesia, Etihad, Qantas, Air New Zealand, Virgin Australia or Air China. As with any deal, policies vary widely and the whole process is not without a few caveats. For some airlines, such as Lufthansa, upgrades only go as high as premium economy, meaning passengers with visions of champagne flutes are bound to be disappointed. Others, such as Virgin Australia and Etihad, deny upgraded passengers swankier perks such as chauffeur service or extra baggage allowance that normally accompany a business-class ticket. Most airlines only allow upgrades on select routes, and bar passengers with group tickets or discounted tickets entirely.

KNOW HOW AND WHEN TO BID

Like any auction, a number of contenders will inevitably bid the absolute minimum, meaning that going even slightly over gives you a distinct advantage. Choosing flights that are popular with leisure rather than corporate travelers increases the odds of a free seat in business class. Flying solo will also likely boost your chances. If you bid on a ticket for more than one person, the amount you put down will be multiplied by the number of people on the ticket. If there aren't enough upgrades for everyone, you'll all end up back where you started. Even if you've got company, consider entering separately and letting the best man (or woman) win. You can always buy the loser a drink once you reach your destination.

Finally, while airlines are notoriously cagey about disclosing what will help a bidder succeed, some, including Air China, have openly acknowledged that having a high status or belonging to their mileage program helps. It's hardly a guarantee, but it might be worth signing up just in case.



USE OUTSIDE HELP

Unsurprisingly, there's—well, not an app for that, but definitely a website. Canadian tech startup **Plusgrade** *(plusgrade.com)* works with 31 airlines around the globe, including Tigerair, Garuda Indonesia and SriLankan Airlines, to allow customers to scout out their options. Certain airlines on the site, including Virgin Australia, feature a "Strength Meter" to help you gauge the odds that a particular bid will score you that coveted, comfy seat. Although the numbers vary drastically depending on the day and the route, a few customers have reported serious savings—think premium economy to business class on a trans-Pacific long-haul from Auckland for US$750. Not bad given that the difference between those two tickets typically sells for thousands.

An alternative is **Optiontown** *(optiontown.com)*, which operates on a different principle, but claims to offer up to 75-percent savings on an upgrade to business or first. Instead of bidding, wannabe high-flyers sign up for their "Upgrade Travel Option" on partner airlines including AirAsia X, Air India, Cambodia Angkor Air and Vietnam Airlines. You pay a set price up front and, depending on availability, you'll either be upgraded no later than four hours before your flight or have the fee automatically refunded within five days. Loyal customers are rewarded, meaning the more often you try, the better your chances of succeeding.

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From a Hindu purification ritual in Bali to a paddleboard tour of mangroves in Thailand, these offers keep you balanced, both mentally and physically.

A lively room for four at Campus HK.

SUPER SAVER

New World Manila Bay Hotel, Manila

Access to the Residence Club Living Room, with all-day refreshments, afternoon tea and evening cocktails, comes at a steal for those registered on the website. **The Deal** Residence Club offer: a night in a Residence Club room, from P4,650 for two, through March 31. **Save up to 50%**. *manilabay.newworldhotels.com.*

FAMILY

HONG KONG

Campus HK

Your 61-square-meter room has four individual beds and desks as well as a kitchen to use for your snacking pleasure. For complimentary breakfast, head to the property's new dining outlet, Anchor's Seafood & Beer House. Return at sunset for a few beers, a seafood buffet and views of the Rambler Channel. **The Deal** Family room promotion: a night in a family room, from HK$1,100 for four, through July 31. **Save 30%**. *campushk.com.*

SAMUI

InterContinental Samui Baan Taling Ngam Resort

The new Family rooms have a children's corner where kids can snuggle up in a white bunk bed, dig up toys from a large trunk and spend some quiet time with the coloring books. The little ones can also visit Planet Trekker Kids Club and take a Junior Master Chef class for free. For the parents, complimentary two-hour daily babysitting service is available so you can disappear to the spa for your included 60-minute therapeutic massage for two. **The Deal** Family Pleasures: a night in a Family room, from 21,000 for two adults and two children, through December 31. **Save 20%**. *samui.intercontinental.com.*

CITY

BANGKOK

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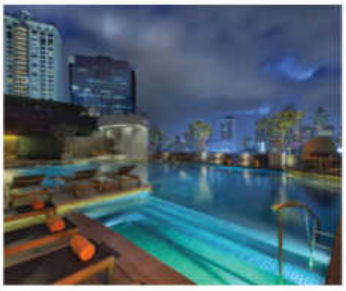

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SINGAPORE

Hôtel Vagabond

This boutique newcomer by renowned polo player Satinder Garcha and designer Jacques Garcia turns an Art Deco building near Kampong Glam and Little India into a velvety maroon-gold haven that would look at home in Paris. You may be equally allured by the house-made charcuterie by Drew Nocente at the on-site restaurant 5th Quarter, another outpost by restaurateur Loh Lik Peng, and the artisanal spirits at Bar Vagabond, a modern French salon-style drinkery. The glamorous launch package also comes with a free one-way airport transfer. **The Deal** Say Hello to Vagabond: a night in a Classic room, from S$257 for two, ongoing. **Save 35%**. *hotelvagabondsingapore.com*.

DINING

CHINA

Dusit Thani Dongtai, Jiangsu

The Thai hospitality brand debuted in January in Dongtai, Jiangsu Province, 250 kilometers north of Shanghai. The 160-guestroom property offers three dining outlets including Goodreach Chinese restaurant, which serves classic Cantonese alongside local Huaiyang dishes, emphasizing light, fresh and sweet flavors. **The Deal** Grand Opening special: a night in a Deluxe room, from RMB498 for two, through March 31. **Save 40%**. *dusit.com*.

DUBAI

St. Regis

This new 234-room marble masterpiece, part of the emirate's first integrated urban resort, welcomes guests with Dhs250 daily credit. You can use it at any of the eight dining venues, including the St. Regis Bar, where a vintage Bentley-inspired mural is on display, or spend it on the pampering programs at the city's first Iridium Spa. **The Deal** Opening package: a night in a Deluxe room, from Dhs1,904 for two, through March 31. **Save 21%**. *stregis.com*.

A Deluxe Garden suite at Sudamala Suites & Villas Sanur.

PHUKET

Manathai Surin

This new 66-room boutique embodies the island's heritage with its birdcage-inspired furniture. Your deal offers a dinner at Pad Thai restaurant; a 60-minute romantic massage and a 10-percent discount on subsequent treatments; 25-percent savings on food and beverages; and a round-trip airport transfer. **The Deal** Honeymoon in Surin: four nights in a Manathai Duplex suite, from Bt26,000 for two, through October 31. **Save 40%**. *manathai.com*.

CULTURE

HONG KONG

Mandarin Oriental

The official hotel of this year's Art Basel—and a gourmand's favorite, boasting Michelin stars for three of its restaurants—marries art and gastronomy to create limited-time-only menus served at the Mandarin Grill + Bar, Pierre, The Mandarin Cake Shop and M Bar. Along with unlimited access to the art fair, the Vernissage, the Collectors Lounge and a series of special events, you will also receive a bottle of "R" de Ruinart champagne and surprise artsy treats upon arrival. **The Deal** Art Stay: a night in a Deluxe room, from HK$4,799 for two, March 19-29. **Save 40%**. *mandarinoriental.com*.

BALI

Sudamala Suites & Villas Sanur

Deep in the jungle of Bali lies Tirta Sudamala, a Hindu temple with spring ponds and nine fountains used in an ancient cleansing ritual called *melukat*. Your private assistant will guide you through the process, and also provide lunch and temple donation. Back at the hotel, a 60-minute Balinese massage for two, a two-course dinner at Ares Steak & Pasta and a stroll through Sudakara Art Gallery await. **The Deal** Purifying Waters Experience: two nights in a Deluxe Garden suite, from US$540 for two, through October 31. **Save 26%**. *sudamalaresorts.com*.

ACTIVE

INDONESIA

Ria Golf Lodge

Smooth out your swing with unlimited rounds of golf, which come with a buggy, a caddy and golfer's insurance, at Ria Bintan Golf Club. A one-way express immigration clearance with golf bag handling and convenience fees included makes getting to the Indonesian island a breeze. **The Deal** Stay & Play: a night in a Par room, from Rp4,180,000 for two, through June 30. **Save 40%**. *riabintan.com*.

THAILAND

Aleenta Hua Hin-Pranburi

You won't have to worry about your carbon footprint while you enjoy this three-day action-packed eco-escape: explore local mangroves on a paddleboard; ride a bike through pineapple groves; tour an organic farm; and make pineapple paper. Then unwind with a 60-minute sauna-and-scrub session, sunrise yoga, tai chi lesson and a temple visit. **The Deal** Saddle 2 Paddle Experience: two nights in a Pool Residence, from Bt26,000 for two, through November 30. **Save 50%**. *aleenta.com*.

—MONSICHA HOONSUWAN

COURTESY OF SUDAMALA SUITES & VILLAS SANUR

Celebrate Tamil Nadu

Tamilnadu's Festival Season

The Chithirai Festival at Madurai will be celebrated in April 2016 followed by Summer Festival with Flower Shows at Hill Stations. Come, Celebrate and get enchanted.

Tamil Nadu Tourism

Commissionerate of Tourism, Tamil Nadu Tourism Complex,
No. 2, Wallajah Road, Chennai - 600 002. Tamil Nadu, India.
Ph: 91-44-2533 3555. Fax: 91-44-2533 3772. **Toll Free No. 1800 4253 1111**
Website: www.tamilnadutourism.org E-mail: ttdc@vsnl.com
For online booking log on to : www.ttdconline.com

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DIPR/1621/Display/2015

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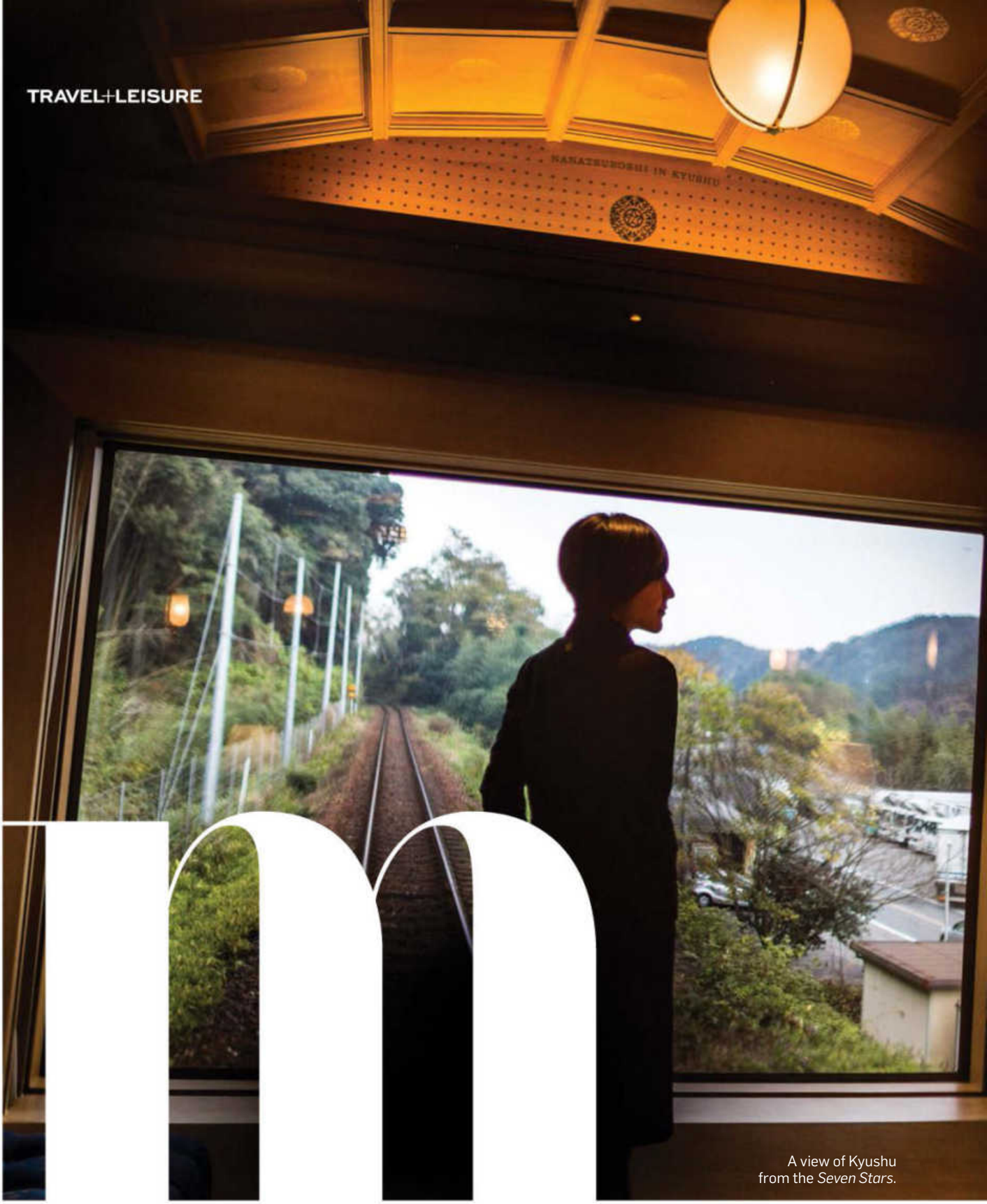


A view of Kyushu from the *Seven Stars*.

AARON JOEL SANTOS

/ **MARCH 2016** / 100 Places you must visit in Asia | Revamped glamour in Bangkok at The House on Sathorn | Exploring the high altitude wilds of Yunnan | Touring Kyushu is best when aboard a luxury train

WE MARK OUR MILESTONE 100TH ISSUE WITH A GRAND TOUR OF INSPIRING ISLANDS, HOTELS AND 'HOODS, RESTAURANTS, RAIL TRIPS AND ADVENTURES. IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES, YOU'LL FIND A FEW, LIKE PHU QUOC IN VIETNAM, THAT ALSO APPEARED IN OUR FIRST MAGAZINE, AND OTHERS, SUCH AS THE ST. REGIS LANGKAWI, MAKING THEIR WORLD DEBUTS. THESE TRIPS WILL HAVE YOU PLANNING COUNTLESS FUTURE VACATIONS—BECAUSE THE HARDEST THING ABOUT PICKING 100 AWESOME PLACES IN ASIA ISN'T IN COMPILING THE LIST BUT IN CULLING IT.

100 Places to go in Asia

BURMA BOATING YACHT CHARTERS *(burmaboating.com)*. From their port in the pristine Mergui Archipelago, where they run regular cruises, the fleet can sail you anywhere from the Andaman Sea to the Java Sea in relaxed luxury.

Wonderfruit.

MUSIC FESTIVALS

EXPAND YOUR AURAL HORIZONS AT SOME OF THE MANY MUSIC FESTS AROUND THE REGION.

WONDERFRUIT (*wonderfruitfestival.com*). Chonburi, Thailand. December 15-18. Arts, sustainable living and music pumping til past dawn.

ADELAIDE (*adelaidefestivalcentre.com.au*). A slew of festivals throughout the year showcasing art forms from cabaret to guitar.

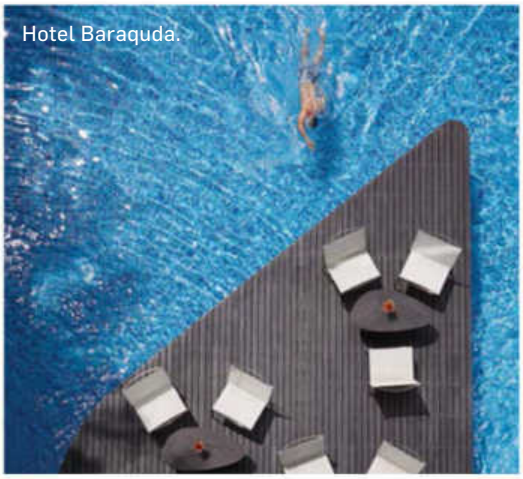
RAINFOREST WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL (*rwmf.com*). Kuching, Malaysia. August 5-7. The best traditional musicians from the far reaches of the globe.

FUJI ROCK (*fujirock-eng.com*). Yuzawa, Japan. July 22-24. All the big names, presented Coachella-style, minus the pretentions, plus hot springs.

SHED HARRIED HONG KONG IN BEAUTIFUL, BEACHY, LEAFY *SAI KUNG*.

Pattaya

The much-maligned Thai beach town steps up its game with a bunch of new classy properties, the Hotel Baraquda (mgallery.com), Ozo (ozohotels.com), Mövenpick (movenpick-pattaya.com), and U (upattaya.com) among them.


Hotel Baraquda.

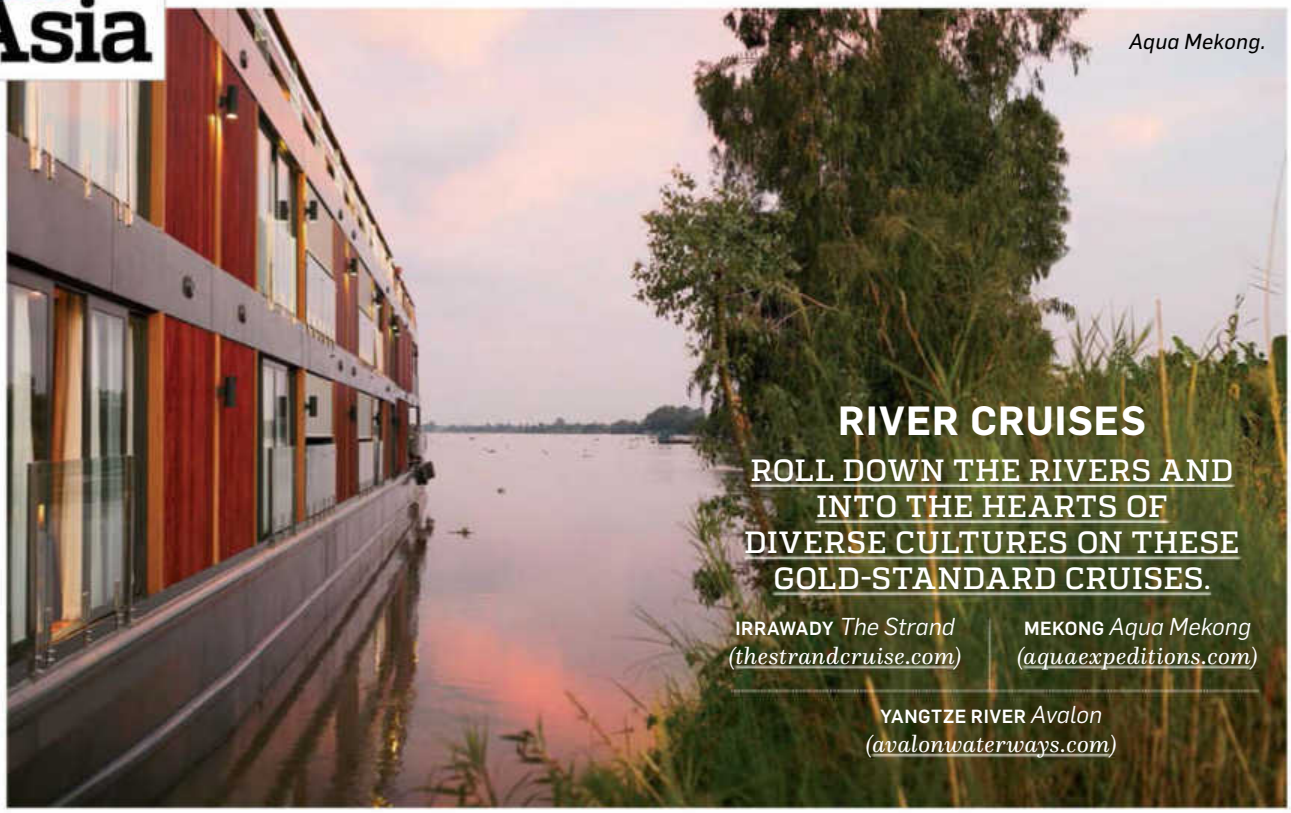
YARRA VALLEY WINE TOUR: *Pretty, premium, fuss-free vineyards just an hour east of Melbourne.*

Tri.

SRI LANKA: HOTEL HOPPING

Sri Lanka's still-untrammeled landscape, welcoming culture and small size make it seem purpose-built for boutiques, which are appearing all around the island, and are ever-more accessible thanks to improved infrastructure. Plan your own hop among new hotels Owl and the Pussycat (*otphotel.com*), Tri (*trilanka.com*) and Anantara (*anantara.com*). Or let multi-property Jetwing (*jetwinghotels.com*) or Celyon Tea Trails (*teatrails.com*) shuttle you around Sri Lanka.

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF WONDERFRUIT; COURTESY OF HOTEL BARAQUDA; COURTESY OF TRI.
OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF BURMA BOATING



Aqua Mekong.

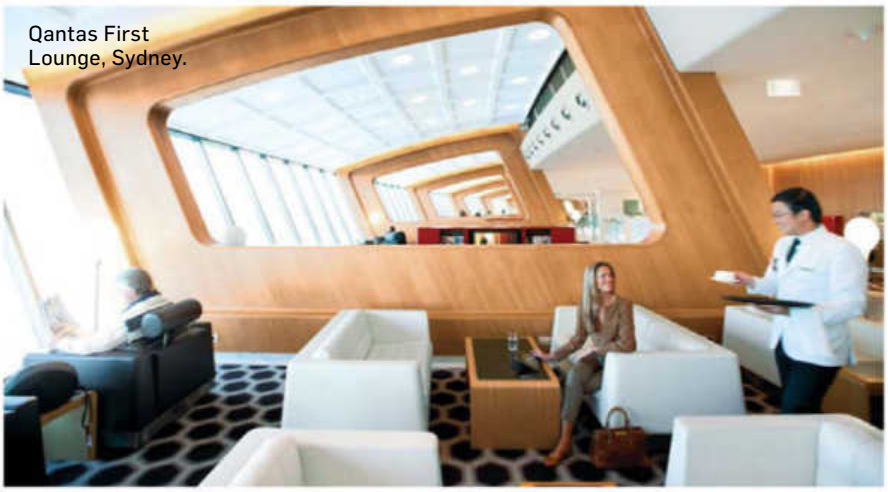
RIVER CRUISES

ROLL DOWN THE RIVERS AND INTO THE HEARTS OF DIVERSE CULTURES ON THESE GOLD-STANDARD CRUISES.

IRRAWADY *The Strand* (thestrandcruise.com)

MEKONG *Aqua Mekong* (aquaexpeditions.com)

YANGTZE RIVER *Avalon* (avalonwaterways.com)



Qantas First Lounge, Sydney.

AMAZING AIRLINE LOUNGES

EARNING PREMIUM STATUS ON THESE AIRLINES COULD BE WORTH IT JUST FOR THEIR FIVE-STAR SIGNATURE LOUNGES.

QANTAS FIRST LOUNGE: *SYD* AND *MEL* (qantas.com.au)

THE PIER, CATHAY PACIFIC: *HKG* (cathaypacific.com)

CONCORDE BAR & LOUNGE, BRITISH AIRWAYS: *SIN* (britishairways.com)

Bali Beach Clubs

POTATO HEAD, SEMINYAK (ptthead.com)

NIKKI BEACH, NUSA DUA (nikkibeach.com)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: TONY LAW; COURTESY OF POTATO HEAD, SEMINYAK; COURTESY OF NIKKI BEACH BALI; COURTESY OF QANTAS. OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF THE BRANDO

The Brando.

PRIVATE ISLANDS

The ultimate luxury? Getting away from everything and everyone on an island paradise you can call your own. Whether they've got lavish amenities like Laucala's private submarine or over-the-top eco-ethos embodied by The Brando's seawater air conditioning system, these resorts indulge 110% of your wildest castaway dreams.

AROVEDA BY AKARYN, Cambodia *(akaryn.com)*
BALESIN, Philippines *(balesin.com)*
BASK GILI MENO, Indonesia *(baskgilimeno.com)*
THE BRANDO, French Polynesia *(thebrando.com)*
LAUCALA, Fiji *(laucala.com)*

OMAN

Two much-anticipated Anantara resorts are slated to open this year, joining the already beloved Alila Jabal Akhdar *(alilahotels.com)* and Six Senses Zighy Bay *(sixsenses.com)* in the topographically spectacular seaside sultanate.

Six Senses Zighy Bay.

ANANTARA KIHAVAH MALDIVES VILLAS
(kihavah-maldives.anantara.com)

CAPELLA SINGAPORE
(capellahotels.com/singapore)

FOUR FAVORITE HOTELS

WE ARE SIMPLY SWEET ON THESE PERFECT-IN-EVERY-WAY ACCOMMODATIONS.

THE RITZ-CARLTON, KYOTO
(ritzcarlton.com/kyoto)

FOUR SEASONS TENTED CAMP GOLDEN TRIANGLE, IN CHIANG RAI
(fourseasons.com/goldentriangle)

Three Haute Chinese Meals

MANDARIN ORIENTAL TAIPEI
(mandarinoriental.com)

FOUR SEASONS HONG KONG
(fourseasons.com)

SHANGRI-LA CHENGDU
(shangri-la.com)

SETOUCHI TRIENNALE INTERNATIONAL ART FESTIVAL
(setouchi-artfest.jp/en)
Kagawa, Japan. From March 20.

{ PALAWAN. }

AUCKLAND WINE REGIONS

Head to the top of the New Zealand's North Island for stunning sea-view terroirs that birth beautiful Cabernets and award-winning Syrahs.

+ WAIHEKE ISLAND
+ MATAKANA
+ WEST AUCKLAND

Matakana.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: PORNSAK NA NAKORN; COURTESY OF CAPELLA SINGAPORE; CHRISTOPHER KUCWAY; COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS HONG KONG; CHRISTOPHER KUCWAY; COURTESY OF MATAKANA STYLE; COURTESY OF RITZ-CARLTON KYOTO; COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS TENTED CAMP GOLDEN TRIANGLE. OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF SIX SENSES ZIGHY BAY

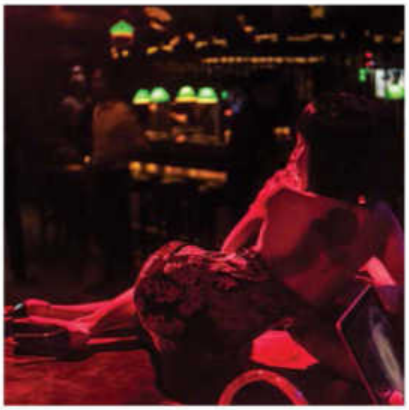
THE ASHLEY SUTTON TOUR

MAKE YOUR WAY ACROSS BANGKOK THROUGH THE EYES OF THE CITY'S MOST IN-DEMAND SPACIAL DESIGNER, AVANT-GARDE AUSSIE ASH SUTTON... THEN HEAD UP TO TOKYO, WHERE HE'S OPENED HIS NEWEST NIGHTLIFE OUTPOST.

A.R SUTTON & CO. ENGINEERS SIAM
(Park Lane, Ekkamai)

MR. JONES' ORPHANAGE
(fb.com/mrjonesorphanage)

SING SING THEATER
(fb.com/singsingtheater)



MAGGIE CHOO'S
(fb.com/maggiechoos)

THE IRON FAIRIES, TOKYO
(fb.com/ironfairiesjapan)

THE IRON FAIRIES, BANGKOK
(fb.com/ironfairiesbkk)

Thailand's longest canopy walkway, among the treetops of **QUEEN SIRIKIT BOTANICAL GARDEN** *in Chiang Mai* (qsbg.org).

VANG VIENG HOT-AIR BALLOONING.

TUSI UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Archaeological sites of non-Han tribal chieftains in southwest China date back to the 13th century. Relics, a necropolis, forts and manors containing family trees and other documents have been found in an area that still preserves the traditions and folklore of several old ethnic groups.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF A.R SUTTON & CO. ENGINEERS SIAM; YESEUL KIM; ASADAVUT SARUM; 27BEGIN.COM; ©MANAGEMENT OFFICE OF TANGYA TUSI DOMAIN; RICHARD MCLEISH; COURTESY OF THE IRON FAIRIES TOKYO. OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF STUDIO CITY MACAU

MACAU
From the figure-eight-Ferris-wheel-fronted Studio City Macau (*studiocity-macau.com*) movie-themed extravaganza to Karl Lagerfeld's great expectations of a design hotel in the works, the accommodations options are dizzying.

Ubud Hanging Gardens.

UBUD

Bali's beaches are great, but its lush interior is a wonderful world of its own, with white-water rafting, terraced rice fields, and traditional crafts and culture. A plethora of new openings helps you see the sea of green in style.

Date night in KL

NEROVIVO (*nerovivo.com*), for an extensive menu of some of Asia's best Italian, to linger over in the cozy, convivial restaurant or out on the rustic, romantic patio.

HEXA (*60-3/5888-7221*), for mixologist Kelvin Lee's veering-on-crazy cocktail concoctions with ingredients such as *tobiko* and Chinese bacon.

GILLMAN BARRACKS *in Singapore, for contemporary art and cocktails.*

{ GOA. }

The new orangutan preschool rehab in Kepatang, **WEST BORNEO** (international animalrescue.org).

NGAPALI BEACH, BURMA.

ELIZABETH QUAY

Urban renewal hits Perth with a vengance, reincorporating the Swan River into the cityscape with a new complex of hotels, eateries, event and community spaces, and a water park.

WEST LAKE, HANGZHOU.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF UBUD HANGING GARDENS; COURTESY OF NGAPALI BAY VILLAS & SPA; COURTESY OF ELIZABETH QUAY; COURTESY OF INTERNATIONAL ANIMAL RESCUE; CHRISTOPHER KUCWAY; COURTESY OF NEROVIVO RESTAURANT; CHRISTOPHER KUCWAY

The Racha Room.

SAIGON

Hoteliers and hipsters, restaurateurs and urban revivalists are thrusting Vietnam's southern city to the cultural and culinary forefront.

QINGDAO.

DIVING IN THE MALDIVES.

Skiing in **KASHMIR.**

Baekje

HISTORIC AREA: ONE OF THE EARLIEST KINGDOMS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA.

Temples, royal tombs and fortresses dating from 18 BC to 660 AD comprise a UNESCO World Heritage site in mountainous, midwestern Korea.

SULAWESI.

INDONESIA.

PEKALONGAN, Central Java, Indonesia's batik capital where the designs are eye-poppingly lively due to old Dutch influence.

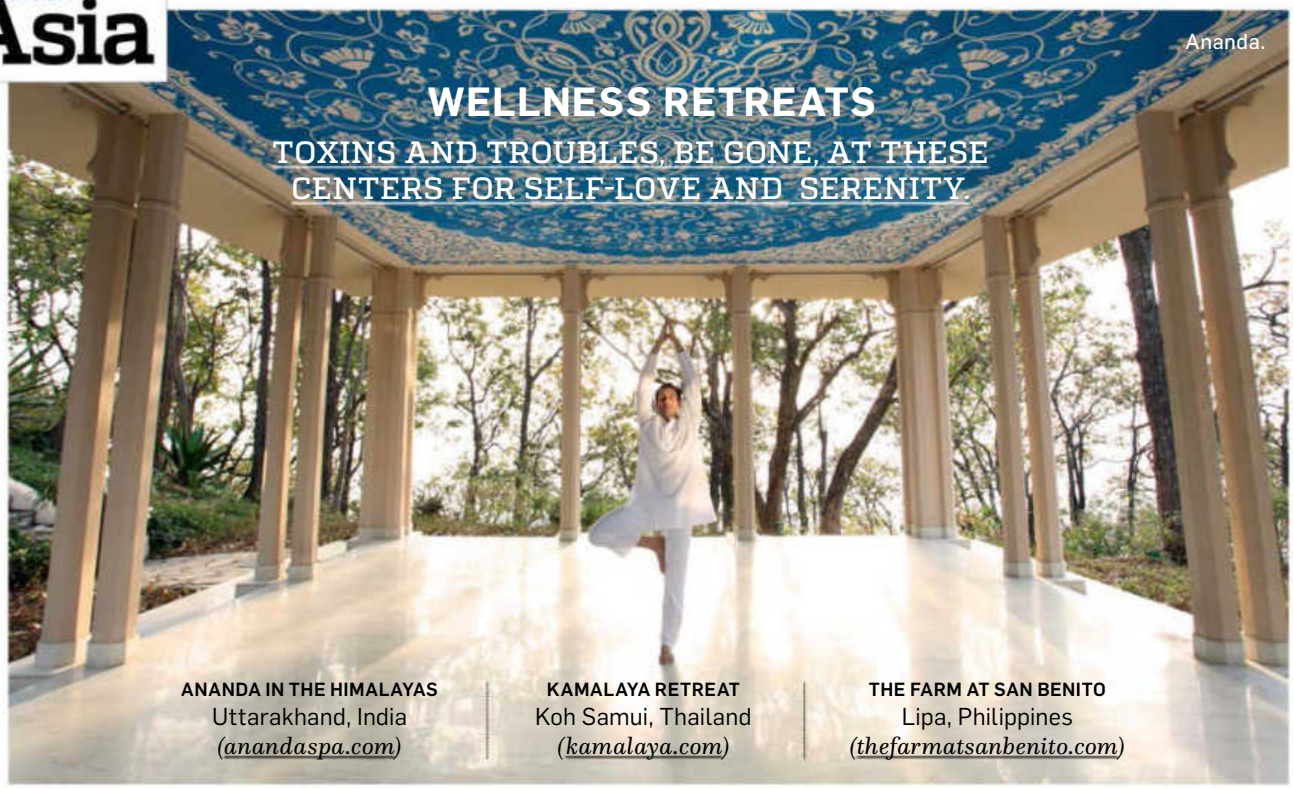
FALL FOLIAGE LEAF-PEEPING IN KOREA.

LANGKAWI, FOR THE GLAM NEW ST. REGIS (*STREGIS.COM*).

KAIKOURA, *New Zealand, to get your sea-life on. Spot whales from a private plane, and swim in the open ocean with wild dolphins.*

PAPUA NEW GUINEA.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: MORGAN OMMER; ©BAEKJE HISTORIC AREAS NOMINATION OFFICE; COURTESY OF ST. REGIS LANGKAWI; ©DANSUPHOTOS/DREAMSTIME.COM; COURTESY OF KOREA NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Ananda.

WELLNESS RETREATS

TOXINS AND TROUBLES, BE GONE, AT THESE CENTERS FOR SELF-LOVE AND SERENITY.

ANANDA IN THE HIMALAYAS
Uttarakhand, India
(anandaspa.com)

KAMALAYA RETREAT
Koh Samui, Thailand
(kamalaya.com)

THE FARM AT SAN BENITO
Lipa, Philippines
(thefarmatsanbenito.com)

Eastern & Oriental Express.

Train Trips

RIDING THE RAILS HASN'T BEEN THIS GLAMOUROUS SINCE THE GILDED AGE. DON'T FORGET TO PACK YOUR TUX.

SEVEN STARS IN KYUSHU
Japan
(cruisetrain-sevenstars.com)

GREAT SOUTHERN RAIL
Australia
(greatsouthernrail.com.au)

EASTERN & ORIENTAL EXPRESS
Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia
(belmond.com)

THE GOLDEN CHARIOT
Southern India
(goldenchariottrain.com)

The Golden Chariot.

Great Southern Rail.

Seven Stars in Kyushu.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF ANANDA IN THE HIMALAYAS; COURTESY OF GOLDEN CHARIOT TRAIN; AARON JOEL SANTOS; COURTESY OF GREAT SOUTHERN RAIL; COURTESY OF EASTERN & ORIENTAL EXPRESS. OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF MECHA UMA

Mecha Uma.

THREE MEALS IN MANILA

PREPARE YOUR APPETITE AND YOUR INSTAGRAM FOR DROOL-WORTHY DINING IN THE PHILIPPINE CAPITAL.

THE BELLE & DRAGON
New gastropub
(63-2/720-8700)

MECHA UMA
Modern omakase
(mechauma.ph)

BLACK BIRD
Gilded Sunday brunch
(63-2/828-4888)

***BURKHAN KHALDUN*, GENGHIS KHAN'S BIRTHPLACE AND BURIAL GROUND IN MONGOLIA.**

Hot Singapore 'hoods

TWO LIVELY MELTING POTS OF NEW BOHEMIANS AND OLD-TIMERS.

TIONG BAHRU
The city's first housing estate has evolved into a still-authentic area where mah-jongg-playing seniors share space with flat white-sipping hipsters.

KEONG SAIK
The Kodachrome shophouses of Chinatown's former gangster-run red-light district teem with the city's trendiest bars, bistros, cafés and hotels.

NEW AUSSIE CRUISE PORTS

Pop in at these five new ports of call off north and east Australia, sailing cruise ships to where few tourists have gone before. Get acquainted with their aboriginal and Polynesian cultures, and visit habitats of rare animals like olive ridley turtles and saltwater crocs.

+ BATHURST
+ TIWI + ELCHO
Silversea ports
(silversea.com)

+ THURSDAY
+ COOKTOWN
Azmara ports
(azmaraclubcruises.com)

BHUTAN.

THE BUND, FOR BARS WITH VIEWS *over Shanghai. Some of the best new scenes are at Glam (m-restaurantgroup.com) and Shen (86-21/6316-9119).*

CHENGDU AND THE RESEARCH BASE OF GIANT PANDA BREEDING

The largest city in western China is seeing a major boom in both baby pandas and hotels.

NEW ZEALAND CYCLING ROUTE: RIDE TOP TO BOTTOM OF BOTH ISLANDS *(NZCYCLETRAIL.COM)*.

PHNOM PENH is experiencing a renaissance of mod restaurateurs and expecting a posh new Rosewood hotel.

SURFING *SOUTHERN TAIWAN.*

Sip your way through Seoul on a **SOJU TOUR** (gastrotourseoul.com).

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF 40 HANDS; COURTESY OF KEONG SAIK SNACKS; CHRISTOPHER KUCWAY; NZCYCLETRAIL.COM. OPPOSITE: MARC CHAFIAN

MAGICAL MOMENTS

JUST THE RIGHT TIMES TO BASK IN SIX FANTASTIC PLACES.

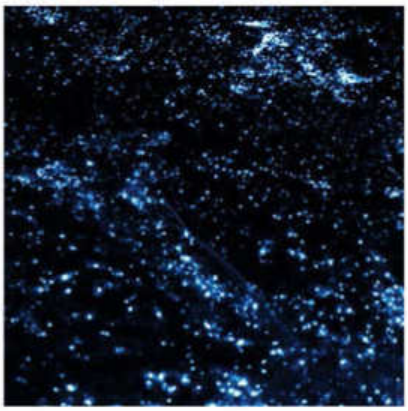
ARASHIYAMA in Kyoto at 8 a.m., to revel in the morning glory of the majestic bamboo forest before the pesky tour buses arrive to ruin your Zen.

RORY'S BEACH BAR—or, honestly, any sandy spot on west coast Phu Quoc—at 5:30 p.m. It's the only place for a coastal sunset in Vietnam.

LIMEWOOD in Repulse Bay, Hong Kong at 12 p.m. Sunday, for a leisurely fusion-food beachy brunch where you're sure to run into half of your pals in the city.

THONGLOR, the neighborhood surrounding Sukhumvit Soi 55 in Bangkok at 10 p.m. Friday, for high-end but low-key nightlife fun including the brand-new The Commons.

THE BAYON TEMPLE of Angkor at 2 p.m., after a sleep or swim through the hottest sun, but early enough to snag a selfie in solitude with an iconic giant stone face.



MALACCA STRAIT at 2 a.m., when, on a sail between Langkawi and Penang, waves glittering with bioluminescent plankton break on the bow of your boat and the stars light up the sky.

MANDARIN ORIENTAL HONG KONG (*mandarinoriental.com*), with three Michelin-starred restaurants: Pierre, Mandarin Grill + Bar, and Man Wah.

A brand-new beaut in the Bay of Bengal, **JALAKARA** (*jalakara.info*) villa-resort opens up Havelock Island in the Andamans.

SOFITEL METROPOLE HANOI (*sofitel.com*), one of Asia's prettiest grande dames, with certainly its tastiest croque monsieur.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CHRISTOPHER KUCWAY; MORGAN OMMER; URAIRACK SUBPAYASARN; @WATCHERFF/DREAMSTIME.COM; CHRISTOPHER KUCWAY; COURTESY OF LIMEWOOD. OPPOSITE: CHRISTIAN HOGUE

SOI NANA IN CHINATOWN, BANGKOK

A slew of artsy galleries, bars, rooftops and small businesses (places like Cho Why, Tep Bar, 23 Bar & Gallery, and El Chiringuito, *pictured*) has turned this little neighborhood of old shophouses into a cool-kids block party. Old local families that still dominate the population keep the place grounded.

Raising the House

An opulent old manor in the middle of new Bangkok is reawakening the Gilded Age. The House on Sathorn sashays back into the spotlight as the city's most coveted address for dining, drinking and generally being fabulous—just the way its founder would have wanted.

Story by: **Jeninne Lee-St. John**
Photographer: **Ausadavut Sarum**
Photographer's assistants: **Kaona Nilavajara, Narubas Bangpasert** | Stylist: **Saranya Ariyakul**
Makeup artist: **Kamolwish Warapornpiyakamol**
Hair stylist: **Paweethida Wattanachaiphithak**
Model: **Yulia R/Apple Model**

Printed maxi dress by Vatanika; heels by Jimmy Choo.

Sauntering up to The House's grand entrance, in printed maxi dress by DVF; heels by Jimmy Choo; rose brooch and hat by Soda.
OPPOSITE: In the dining room, in dress by Chai Gold Label; earrings by Sretsis.

It is 1889. Bangkok is still oriented on the banks of the Chao Phraya River, and what would later become the central metropolis is now mostly verdant jungle draped by *lamphu* trees. You are a wealthy Chinese businessman building a massive canal off the river, using the land excavated by the dig to construct a roadway on either side. For your work, you are bequeathed the title Luang Sathorn Rajayutka by King Chulalongkorn, and you know you need a home

worthy of your status. Having adorned your collonaded colonial villa with lucky images of pigs, your lunar zodiac sign, and Chinese rice flowers to please your mistress, you fling open your louvred shutters and survey the new major thoroughfare that bears your name. Your neighbors are Thai aristocrats, tossing up their own grand estates with overflowing orchid gardens, and foreign embassies whose proliferation later helps jack up land prices and push the locals to sell their pieces of Eden.

A century and a quarter on, the marigold manor—having itself functioned as the Soviet Union's embassy after a stint as a hotel—is once again welcoming the glitterati. Sathorn

Hanging at the bar, in dress by Chai Gold Label; earrings by 77th.

Getting comfortable in the hospitality suite, in dress by Chloé; gladiator shoes by Jimmy Choo.

Ascending, in pleated dress by Chai Gold Label; heels and clutch by Jimmy Choo.

Road has seen a sparkling and swift rejuvenation in the past few years and the last manse standing, now reborn as **The House on Sathorn**, has been restored by W Bangkok as a gorgeous old-world gem amid the seemingly unrelenting modernity. In the sumptuous red dining room, you'll find chef Fatih Tutak chatting up the city's doyennes about his pan-Asian-inspired menu; his is a rare blend of artistry and cookery in dishes (see the duck breast splashed by pomegranate blood dubbed "Hunting") that are both literal representations of their names yet also lip-smackingly delicious. Bangkok's bright young

things crowd the Art Deco bar for mixologist Michele Montauti's alcoholic artistry, (get the burnt-cinnamon-stick-infused "Flying Pig"), though the leather-filled upstairs lounge and living areas are sexy draws for private events.

If old Luang Sathorn, an ancestor of Queen Sirikit, were here to enjoy his bounty, he'd find out his front windows a SkyTrain zipping past where mango and mahogany trees once stood. Perhaps he'd join his consort in the courtyard for afternoon tea—or for a nightcap, when they could gaze up above their maroon turrets past the shiny skyscapers to the still-starlit sky above, a heavenly view of the City of Angels' old and new. *thehouseonsathorn.com.*

Afternoon tea in the courtyard, in dress and clogs by Sretsis; headwear by Soda. OPPOSITE: Overlooking Sathorn Road from the Secret Room, in dress by Chai Gold Label; heels by Jimmy Choo.

Off the Map

In the northern reaches of Yunnan, a Tibetan-influenced land with any number of names demands you slow down and enjoy the moment, even if you cannot fathom exactly where you are.

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY **CHRISTOPHER KUCWAY**

Songzanlin Monastery dates back to 1679. OPPOSITE: At the start of a horse trek into the mountains.

Constantin de Slizewicz wanders across the high-altitude grassland he knows like the back of his weathered hands.

and I'm not entirely convinced he knows where we're going. After a particularly wet rainy season, the land is spongy, its dark greens broken only by patches of viscous mud that will suck your boots off if you're not careful, sprouts of purple wildflowers and broken fence posts that are slowly receding into the Yunnan soil. This isn't a land that is easily tamed. It's so unruly that yaks saunter aimlessly, annoyed that we've appeared. Our Tibetan horses, draped in colorful if basic wool blankets, spot their unshod wild cousins along the way and snort a greeting—or is it an equine plea to be roaming wild once more?

There are no lines of demarcation here, few traces of man aside from the occasional worn path. That's how Constantin, he of the red scarf and pocket square, and knee-high muddy boots, and name you couldn't make up if you tried, prefers it. His is a classic tale of arriving from France a decade earlier, falling in love—with both the place and his English wife whom he met in the nearest town, Zhongdian—and not leaving. Now he leads group treks around the mountains of his adopted home. My problem is that I can't place where we are on a map. I'm not talking pinpoint GPS coordinates; I can't find any landmarks. I can tell you we're in Yunnan, due east of the northern tip of Burma, though there are no overland links through the mountains that form a natural border with China. I also know we're pretty much the last stop before the national highway reaches Lhasa, although it doesn't do that for another 1,600 kilometers. Constantin tells me to relax, enjoy this uncharted territory.

We'd started that morning with a short climb in a cold, drizzling rain to Baiji Temple, a muddy hike above Zhongdian, as the Chinese call the town, or Gyalthang, as the Tibetans refer to it, or Shangri-la, preferred moniker of the tourism marketing people. To Tibetans, Shangri-la is not an actual place but a feeling in their hearts. This land, Tibetan in nature yet within modern-day China, was home to more than 30 isolated cultures as late as the 1930s. Zhongdian was the last trading post before the Hengduan Mountains rise to the Tibetan Plateau. This valley that shares the Salween, Mekong and Yangzte rivers was along the Tea Horse Road, a route where Chinese tea was traded for Tibetan horses. It lasted into the 1940s, until horses were no longer of military use. Today, nearby Tangpeicun Village is home to a number of wizened veterans of that trade route, their faces as corrugated as the weather-beaten landscape they once crossed. At Baiji Temple, juniper branches for burning and prayer flags in hand, I made an offering, praying for clearer skies.

Whatever you call it, this corner of China with a Tibetan influence is still opening up to the world. There's even an argument that it's easier to see the Tibetan way of life here than it is in Lhasa, though that's up for debate. One local told me that he felt surveillance around Zhongdian is less than in his homeland, though he did warn of uttering the Dalai Lama's name too loudly. Culture may cross borders, political sensitivities less so. The latest link with the outside world is the Hylandia by Shangri-La, a smartly designed hotel that is a great base for exploring the countryside.

Back on that grassland with Constantin's advice in mind, we pause at the bottom of the pass to take it all in. Aside from a chill wind and some horse bells, all is silent. Soggy

OPPOSITE: The north of Yunnan ascends to the Tibetan Plateau. BELOW: Yaks remain beasts of burden here.

underfoot, the landscape sweeps out to more small hills that rise up briefly topping off in forests of pine. Above us is a big sky, one that dominates every view, its depth even more pronounced with intermittent clouds and those deepening shades of blue common once you ascend above 3,000 meters. Noting the lack of a trail, I ask Constantin where exactly we're headed and he waves his hand towards a forested saddle almost as if the answer was both obvious and irrelevant. Still, he knows. His Gallic sense of place prefers the journey over the arrival. Once at the edge of the plain, we detour up into the trees, along a dirt trail around piles of mani stones and prayer flags strung in the forest, up to a small Buddhist temple that is sanctuary to more chickens and rabbits than monks.

FROM TOP: A Nixi snack of walnuts and mountain honey; black pottery in the hands of a master. OPPOSITE: The main room of Constantin's home, refurbished with a definitive Tibetan flavor.

Sharply back down the hill, past a line of prayer wheels, an inkling of the modern world appears in the form of a brief concrete road that twists around a bend. It leads to a small farming village that, over time, is being absorbed back into the landscape. Hollowed out stone walls are all that remain of some homes. Piglets scurry around. A jet black yak stares at us. Two women shovel rocks outside a farmhouse, oblivious to our passing.

Just as we clear the village, a traffic jam of sheep crests the ridge we're about to descend causing a Yunnan standoff. Atop that same ridge, we're afforded views of barley fields cut by a wide, cold river that snakes its way below sheer cliffs to the west. We cross the river on a bridge of lashed together tree trunks, each as thick as a yak. Around one final bend, through a thicket of branches, Constantin spots his place. Tibetan-style homes are multistory square structures, built against the elements and, from outside, practical in the extreme. Whitewashed stone walls are punctuated with sturdy wooden windows and topped off with a slate roof.

Pots of hot coffee and tea await on his porch, which overlooks a small courtyard and, beyond that, a walled-in grassland that could accommodate a football pitch or two. Inside, Constantin and his wife have refurbished the interiors to a Tibetan sheen that wouldn't be out of place in a homes magazine and, as a reward for today's trek—as if the scenery in this remote corner of Yunnan weren't enough—we're having a candlelit dinner in this wood-stove warmed room. Plush throw rugs with Tibetan motifs, hand-carved plank floors, ornately painted wood-paneled walls, all of this meshes with our European menu, French and Middle Kingdom wines. It really feels like we're far from everywhere, both geographically and in time. Constantin regales us with tales of living amongst Tibetan farmers in this far corner of China, of dinner parties with the unlikely mix of Buddhist monks and European trekkers—Pu'er tea or red wine, depending upon your preference—winters of welcome solitude and weeklong horse treks through the mountains. French and English, Tibetan and Mandarin, the lively soundtrack to this evening ends all too soon.

There's a silence that is hanging heavy over our lunch the next day. We're at our guide Zhaxi Qidan's home, his welcoming family decked out in their finest cottons and silks, all

smiles as they make room for us at their hearty Tibetan meal. The menu includes bowls of potatoes; slices of yak cheese; two mushroom dishes; and wedges of pork fat marinated in yak butter tea. As a group, our interest in assimilating into the local culture, if only for a few days, seems to have reached its limit. Yet, new experiences are what travel is all about, so we eat. Tentatively. Similar to the endless rounds of thick, salty yak butter tea we've been served—an acquired taste—the pork is oily and doesn't cross cultural palates well. Tsampa, or barley balls, are dry, the Tibetan cheese, dense and sharp.

I don't even recognize the massive mushroom my new friend Jasmine, with her permanent smile, bought that morning at the Zhongdian vegetable market. It was so large that she purchased a basket to lug it back to our hotel, fending off requests on the street to resell a fungus the size of a basketball. By lunchtime, that mushroom has been sliced down into bite-sized pieces and cooked with local greens, enough to feed 10 people on its own. All in, an unforgettable lunch and a reminder that Zhongdian, a modest town, remains a stop en route to somewhere else. Its wooden Tibetan quarter is being rebuilt after a fire in 2014, some of the twisting stone-cobbled side streets and lanes housing crafts shops such as Dropenling and the Yunnan Mountain Handicraft Center. New to the town is Shangri-La Hotels, though its modern address is called Hylandia by Shangri-La since many lesser inns have already appropriated the town's latest name. But Hylandia is in a class of its own, brimming with creature comforts expected of the Hong Kong-based group—arriving after midnight following a flight delay, hotel staff insisted a bowl of yak meat noodles was in order and would arrive at my room once I did. The late-night meal went down a charm, the mix of aromatic herbs filling my modern digs and fending off any high-altitude hunger pangs.

Come sunrise, overlooking the town and all its Tibetan influence is Songzanlin Monastery, Yunnan's largest Tibetan monastery. A smaller, mirror image of Lhasa's Potala Palace, Songzanlin dates back to 1679 in one form or another and was originally commissioned by the fifth Dalai Lama. Consisting of two lamaseries, Zhacang and Jikang, the massive monastery has been extensively rebuilt, often with Han rather than Tibetan traits in mind, but retains much of its magic, particularly underneath the gilded copper roofs, in the darkened halls that explode with color from the Buddhist frescoes. We climb up to the top level for an audience with the head monk of this teaching monastery, who turns out to be in his 30s. Speaking in Mandarin, he informs us that our current life consists of facing the consequences of our previous lives. "How do we know how we should behave now when we don't know how we were in the past?" With that religious nugget to chew on, we take our leave. Once back in the main rooms, the full weight of towering images of Buddha presses down on passing supplicants; the centuries of history soar in one hall with 108 solid wood pillars, some of which stretch to 18 meters high. Still, the Han Chinese influence is never

FROM TOP: A Nixi kid with style; a hearty Tibetan lunch of pork fat, yak cheese, potatoes and mushrooms. OPPOSITE: Atop Songzanlin Monastery.

far away. One official tourism description paints an odd picture: "Pious believers, with their knees and foreheads knocking the ground at every step, come here to pray."

Fifty three year old Zha Xi Pei Cuo sits in a late-afternoon beam of light putting the final touches on his latest piece of black pottery. In the back room of his modest home, deep in a valley below highway 214 that leads to Lhasa and noted for the clays needed for his work, the only light shines on him. A master, he started this craft at 18 years old and today works only on commission.

Black pottery is thick, basic stuff, but the finished product brings something else to the table, maybe a little piece of this remote valley home to a dwindling number of Nixi, a Tibetan ethnic group. Their manual work uses a handful of wooden tools to shape and carve patterns in the vessels. But our visit is also a sit-down with this Nixi family. With that in mind, we relax with three generations on their wooden porch, dipping local walnuts into a bowl of the densest honey around. There's an endless supply of both local delicacies but, unlike the pottery, neither is for sale. As on other days in Yunnan, it's the moment that is important. So, I sit back and take it all in.

Over that rich, velvety mountain honey, I remember the pungent flavor of all the yak butter tea we've drunk along the way. I remember the smell of pine and juniper, and sound of prayer flags whipping in the chill wind. The vibrant colors that make up the wardrobes of the locals. Unforgettable and not-to-be-photographed history-laden interiors of Songzanlin, and the lengthy explanations of Tibetan Buddhism from the young monk. But what stands out most, what resonates with those urges to return some day is something Constantin said to us in his home. With the most radiant grin, over French and local wines, within the confines of his beautifully restored Tibetan home that is warmed by cast-iron, wood-burning stoves, he explained his contented nature. "I live at the end of the world. I live in Shangri-la."

Nixi women combine colorful style with welcoming smiles. OPPOSITE: A staring contest you have no chance of winning.

THE DETAILS

GETTING THERE

Zhongdian is connected by air to Chengdu and Shanghai-Hongqiao on China Eastern Airlines *(flychinaeastern.com)*, and Kunming on Lucky Air *(luckyairinc.com)*, among other Chinese cities. Expect delays as the Diqing airport is often fogged in.

Hylandia by Shangri-La A great base to explore this remote region, the modern hotel is a mix of Tibetan, Nepalese, Indian and Chinese design that merges well. Try the ginger tea in the comfortable lobby, as an alternative to yak butter tea and to help with the altitude. Menus here are strong on organic dishes, and there's even a garden on one rooftop. *shangri-la.com; doubles from RMB750.*

Caravane Liotard Treks for between two and 12 people are geared towards individual levels of experience, last between two and four days, and can top 4,000 meters. Accommodation is in extremely comfortable yurt-like tents, with alternating Western and Tibetan meals. *caravane-liotard.com; prices available on request.*

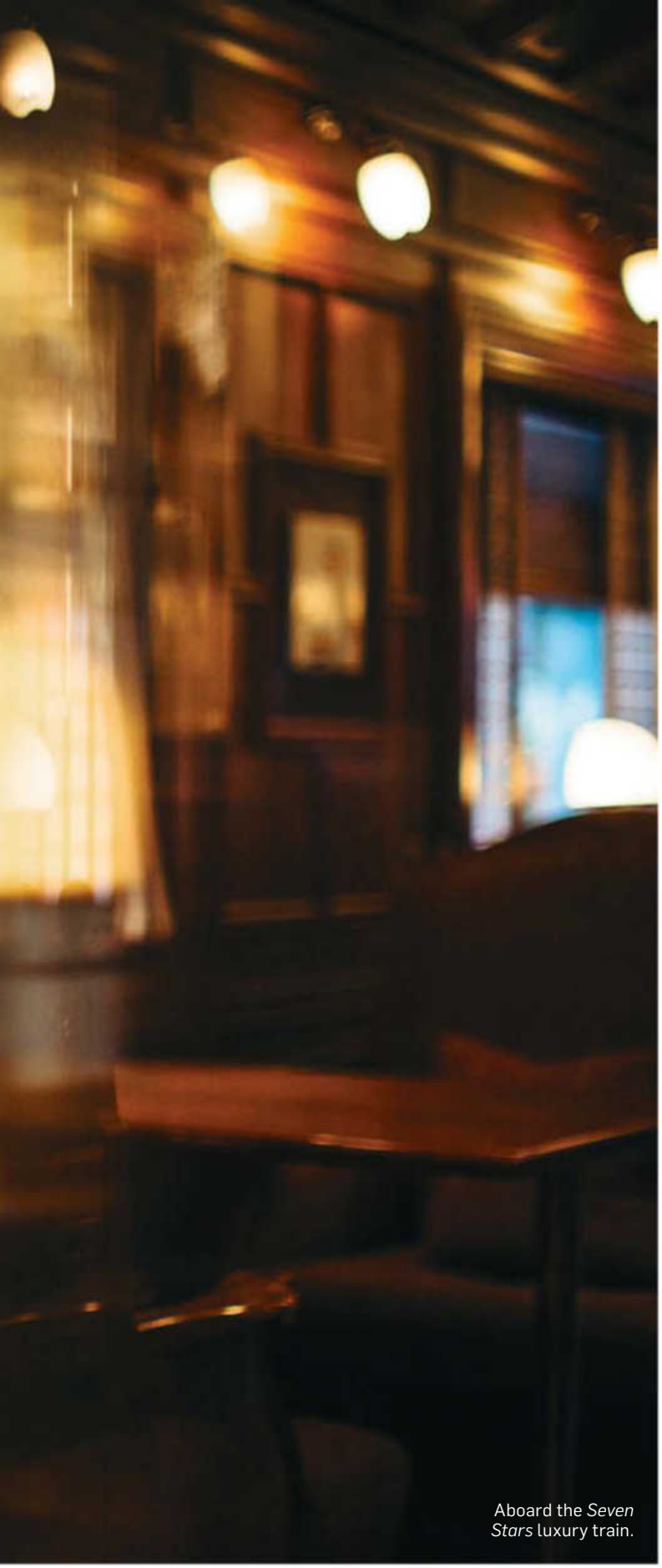
Dropenling Handmade Tibetan handicrafts here are aimed at supporting local women working at home in more remote locales. *18 Cengfang Lu, Zhongdian; 86-887/823-2292; tibetcraft.com.*

Yunnan Mountain Handicraft Center *1 Jinlong Jie, Zhongdian; 86-887/822-7742; ymhfshangrila.com.*

A stylish train agent. CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: A view from the *Seven Stars*; traditional Japanese robes at Dazaifu Shrine; sunrise in Nagasaki; a pork-and-mushroom dish aboard the train; a young fan of luxury trains.

Star Power

Ensconced aboard a luxury train in Kyushu, *Duncan Forgan* discovers the forces of nature—and modern engineering—that make the volcanic, charismatic Japanese island shine so bright. Photographed by *Aaron Joel Santos*



Aboard the *Seven Stars* luxury train.

It is an average and orderly Saturday morning at Hakata Station in Fukuoka. Clutching their expertly packaged bento boxes, travelers form civilized lines at designated queuing spots as trains arrive and depart with millisecond-perfect precision. Amid this tableau of politesse, however, something out of the ordinary is about to happen.

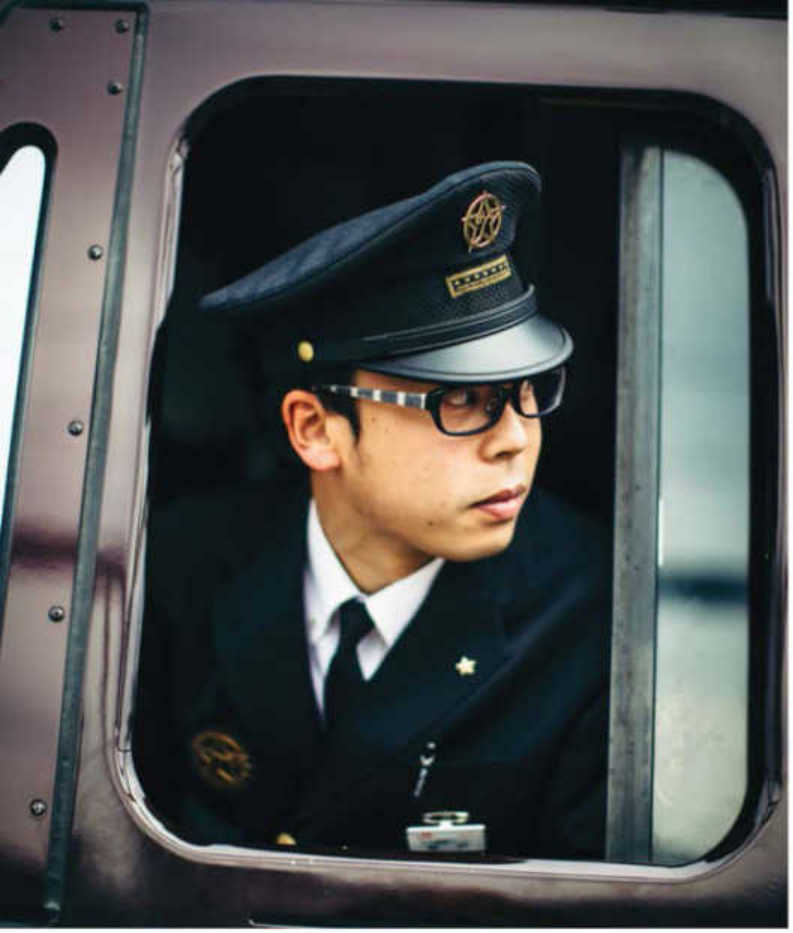
As a guest on the *Seven Stars in Kyushu*—Japan's first (and so far only) luxury sleeper train—I had spent the 15 minutes since boarding exploring the plush interiors of one of the world's most expensive iron horses. So preoccupied had I been with the wall hangings, paper-panel windows and handcrafted furniture in my state-of-the art cabin, I hadn't noticed that our imminent departure had attracted a whooping mass of onlookers to the previously moribund platform.

As we rolled out of the station to a wall of sound created by flag-waving fans, the adulation displayed at every stop gave me a taste of the uplifting and seemingly random nature of Japanese fanaticism. I felt like a rock star. But all that love had turned out not for a passenger but for the train itself, a ¥3-billion baby born out of a desire to promote Kyushu.

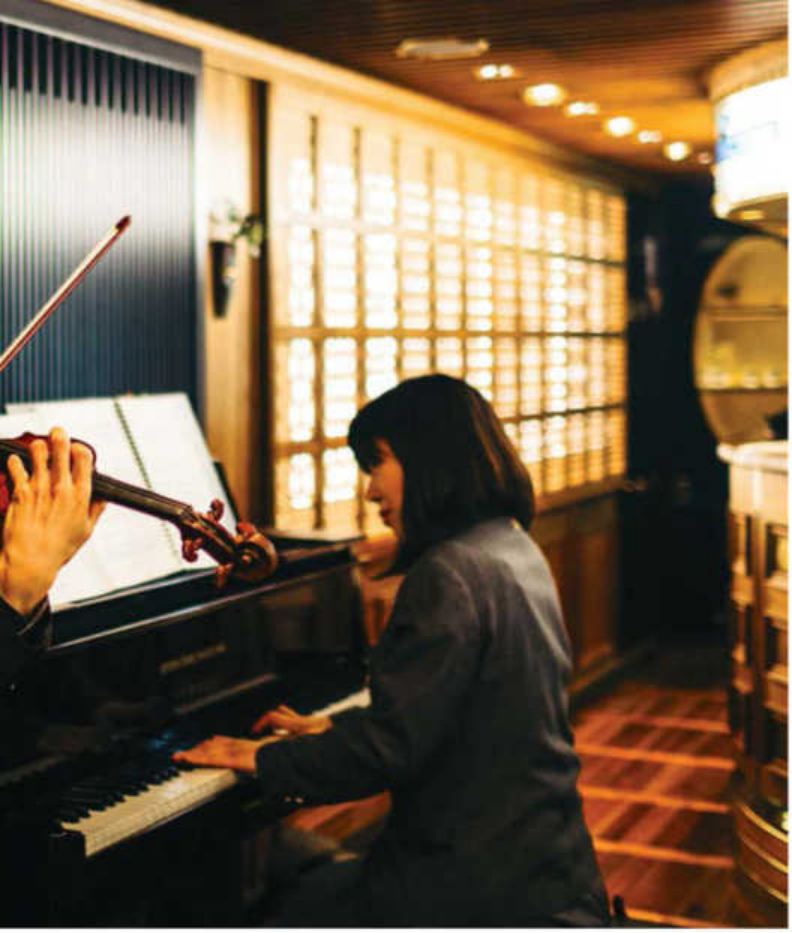
The southernmost of Japan's main islands, Kyushu is one of the country's most holistically appealing areas. Active volcanoes, such as mighty Mount Aso, pour down to rocky, lush coastlines, while steaming *onsen* punctuate the landscape over almost every mossy hillock. Attractive cities such as Fukuoka and Nagasaki provide a cosmopolitan urban edge.

Despite these wonders, Kyushu traditionally has lagged behind other areas in Japan on the tourism front. What was required—decreed Koji Karaike, president of JR Kyushu Railway Company—was a dramatic statement, a sightseeing train that would surpass its high-end peers like the Eastern & Oriental Express and Australia's Great Southern Rail.

With thoroughness as doggedly Japanese as droves arriving like clockwork to wave at total strangers on a train, the company threw everything at the project, which takes its name from Kyushu's seven prefectures. The result toots its own horn in impressive fashion: There's handcrafted woodwork and delicate artwork throughout. There are musicians, magicians and onboard staff who spent up to a year in prelaunch training. Ceramic sinks were inspired by Satsuma porcelain; blinds are made from bamboo, while shoji (Japanese paper screens) add delicateness everywhere. According to Simon Metcalfe—an amiable Kiwi working for JR Kyushu—the train's



Misty mountains near Mount Aso. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A train conductor on the *Seven Stars*; musicians in the dining car; visiting a small shrine in the woods in Yufuin.



designer, Eiji Mitooka, drove his team around the bend with details such as irregular-sized windows to make each carriage unique.

After so much love (and money) was poured into the train—and I haven't even told you about the multicourse meals, private-label booze and knee-weakening views—it is easy to get a little smitten.

As we alight at Nagasaki Station on the first afternoon aboard, I am introduced to Tashiro Kunihiro. Over the course of the journey, I will get to know him even better. A *Seven Stars* superfan, he follows the train on every one of its journeys, driving around Kyushu to ensure he is waiting on the platform wherever the train arrives.

"I have a girlfriend, honest," he laughs at the first stop—a fact I begin to question by our fifth encounter. "I am just proud to be from Kyushu and the sight of the *Seven Stars* makes me enormously happy."

Although liberally bedecked in *Seven Stars* paraphernalia, Tashiro has never been on the train. At a cost of at least US$1,500 per person per night, the *Seven Stars* experience is out of reach for all but the wealthiest of travelers. "I hope that one day I will be able to at least see inside the train," he says. As I bid farewell for now (we'll see him again in a few hours), he calls after me with a hint of despair in his voice: "I'm very jealous of you."

He's not the only one. So extraordinary has demand been for the 14 rooms on the train that JR Kyushu operates an application process for places, conducting a lottery to choose the lucky travelers. In its most recent draw, Metcalfe says, the company received as many as 40 applications for each room from Japanese residents and three more for each room from hopeful overseas guests.

My previous rail-trip experience was a 55-hour slog across the Indian subcontinent. This time I'm sporting a blazer—required evening wear for gentlemen according to the train's dress code—and the shower in my suite is kitted out with paneling of aromatic hinoki cypress wood and a basket of specially branded toiletries. Quite the upgrade.

My first objective is to reach the observation car and claim a well-deserved sundowner. I lurch along the narrow corridor—mastery of walking on a moving train is not easy—passing the doors of other sleeper berths as well as the more spacious deluxe suites, through the dining car, before finally making it to the Blue Moon bar and its full-sized viewing window. It's the ideal place to watch the passing scenery, with a glass or two of

Origami cranes, a symbol of peace, decorate an altar near the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. ABOVE: At the abandoned Hashima island, off the coast of Nagasaki.

special *Seven Stars shochu* from Kagoshima Prefecture in hand.

Penciled in for a late dinner seating, I have plenty of time to stumble back to my cabin to freshen up and make myself presentable. While the corridor can be tricky, the wider dimensions of the room are less disorienting. It is not exactly expansive—this is a train after all—but there's plenty of space to spruce up and recline in one of the two comfortable lounge chairs provided. Even with the addition of a jacket and some new brogues, I feel like a scruff compared to my fellow travelers. The tuxedos and ball gowns on show hold with the train's glamorous persona.

The food is worth getting dressed up for. I am amazed by the creations prepared by executive chef Tamio Kunisaki and his team from their tiny galley. Throughout a five-course French dinner and two equally proportioned Japanese lunches, dishes utilize the best of Kyushu produce and include treats such as organic chicken from Saga Prefecture grilled with salt, roast Nagasaki beef tenderloin and red sea bream cured with seasoned kelp.

The companionship is equally convivial. This is a sociable train and I meet a broad cross section of travelers. As Teemu, a Finnish veteran of other great rail routes such as the Trans-Siberian Express in Russia and The Ghan in Australia, tells me: "Travel today is all about rushing from point to point, airport to airport. Something like this allows you to take things slower and ease into the journey."

It is a mantra I grow to appreciate in the days ahead. Although the relatively bijou nature of the *Seven Stars*' two scheduled routes—a four-day trip and a two-day outing—mean it is some way shy of the world's most epic rail adventures, the journeys traverse some of the island's most seductive landscapes. Traveling from Fukuoka, we veer west along a gorgeous coastal route to the historically compelling port of Nagasaki. The trip also takes in Mount Aso, and the northeastern pastoral countryside up to the hot-spring resort of Yufuin.

The land- and seascapes in Kyushu are incredibly generous and I find myself swooning like a fanboy at various points over the course of the trip. For me, the most affecting moment comes early on the second day as the train departs from Aso Station. Pretty rice fields and woodlands hued with autumnal shades dominate the foreground while the mighty volcano huffs out pillows of smoke in the distance. It's a cinematic scene in keeping with the widescreen appeal of the *Seven Stars* experience. >>

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Passengers strike a pose near Nagasaki.

The train stops for three excursions (and Tashiro-san is there at each one). There's a visit to a famous porcelain kiln at Arita, which makes the exquisite ceramics on show aboard the *Seven Stars*. There's also an early morning drive to a viewing point on Mount Aso, and a stop in the pretty but tourist-heavy town of Yufuin. We decide to detour from the main streets of the *onsen* resort, thronged as they are with visitors filling up on the town's famed sweet-cream roll cake. The reward is a bracing stroll of side alleys plying a course along bubbling streams and through emerald paddies with vistas opening out to the twin peaks of Mount Yufu. If there's anything we'd change it would be to have more free time.

In fact, the excursions, none of which offer deep cultural immersion, feel designed for elderly travelers. But it matters little compared to the appealing rhythm of the ride, which is really why we are here: I spend my days in my cabin either catching up on some reading or dozing off, as if lulled into slumber by the sleepy villages the train passes through as Kyushu's prefectures merge into one another.

As the curtain comes down on our voyage, I end up at the main bar, where the resident piano and violin duo is mugging away on everything from Cole Porter standards to a baroque version of "Blitzkrieg Bop" by The Ramones. The atmosphere in the car is rambunctious but tinged with melancholy. The next day, we will have gone our separate ways. For now, the music is playing and the Japanese single malts are flowing. It is time to pump up the volume on this rock star train.

THE DETAILS

GETTING THERE

Applications will open in April for rooms on the ***Seven Stars in Kyushu*** *(cruisetrain-sevenstars.com)* departures between October 2016 and February 2017. Cathay Pacific *(cathaypacific.com)*, Singapore Airlines *(singaporeair.com)* and Thai Airways *(thaiairways.com)* fly to Fukuoka Airport directly from their hubs. From the airport, ride six minutes on a Kuko Line train to Hakata Station *(subway.city.fukuoka.lg.jp/eng; ¥260)*.

JOURNEYS

4 Days, 3 Nights round-trip journey travels from Fukuoka to Oita, Miyazaki, Kagoshima and Kumamoto, and includes a night at a *ryokan* in Kirishima hot-spring resort town, from ¥1,060,000 for two people sharing a suite, and from ¥1,600,000 for two people sharing a Deluxe suite.

2 Days, 1 Night round-trip northern Kyushu journey travels from Fukuoka to Saga, Nagasaki, Kumamoto and Oita, and includes visits to Arita's porcelain kiln, the picturesque Mount Aso and Yufuin. From ¥500,000 for two people sharing a suite, and from ¥720,000 for two people sharing a Deluxe suite.

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Laurie Noble / *Pulau Perhentian Kecil* / **MALAYSIA**

After a few days photographing the main beaches of Pulau Perhentian Kecil, I decided to walk along this path on the east coast of Malaysia. A shortish walk I hoped, perfect for an overcast day. The path soon became a coastal track, which transformed into the overgrown trail and then the sun came out... way out. Periodically the undergrowth relented and I felt sand under my feet. A beautiful beach lay before me, crystal blue waters at its head and tiny shacks nestled amongst the palms at its rear. Midway across one beach a small furry animal rushed past my legs. A few seconds passed and then a Malaysian face appeared from a shack and inexplicably shouted, "Have you seen my otter?" An hour later, I stumbled out of the vegetation and saw before me a single figure reclined in the middle of the sands on what appeared to be the world's most colorful towel. This was Mira Beach. I took this picture and sat for a while pushing my feet through the sand and staring out to sea.

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